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AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

Old and New Testament,

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

CONTAINING,

The Acts of the Apostles,
THE
Several Epistles in the New Testament,
AND THE
REVELATION.

WHEREIN

Each CHAPTER is summed up in its CONTENTS; the sacred Text inserted at large in distinct paragraphs; each paragraph reduced to its proper Heads; the sense given, and largely illustrated:

WITH

Practical Remarks and Observations.

By MATTHEW HENRY,
late Minister of the Gospel.

The Fourth Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON in *Ludgate-street*, THOMAS COX under the *Royal-Exchange*,
RICHARD FORD and RICHARD HETT both in the *Poultry*, AARON WARD in *Little-Britain*,
and THOMAS LONGMAN in *Pater Noster Row*. 1738.

AN
EXPOSITION
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT,

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING,

<i>The Acts of the Apostles, Romans, I. Corinthians, II. Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians,</i>	<i>Colossians, I. Thessalonians, II. Thessalonians, I. Timothy, II. Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews,</i>	<i>James, I. Peter, II. Peter, I. John, II. John, III. John, Jude, and the Revelation.</i>
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A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Acts of the Apostles,

With Practical Observations.

We have with an abundant satisfaction seen the foundation of our holy religion laid in the history of our blessed Saviour, its great author, which was related and left upon record by four several inspired writers, who all agree in this sacred truth, and the uncontestable proofs of it, That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God ; upon this rock the Christian church is built ; and how it began to be built upon this rock comes next to be related in this book which we have now before us. And of this we have the testimony only of one witness ; for the matters of fact concerning Christ, were much more necessary to be fully related and attested than those concerning the apostles. Had infinite wisdom seen fit we might have had as many books of the acts of the apostles as we have gospels, nay, as we might have had gospels ; but for fear of overburthening the world, John xxi. 25. we have sufficient to answer the end, if we will but make use of it.

The history of this book, (which was always received as a part of the sacred canon) may be considered,

- I. *As looking back to the preceding gospels, giving light to them, and greatly assisting our faith in them. The promises there made we here find made good ; particularly, the great promise of the descent of the holy Ghost, and his wonderful operations, both on the apostles, whom here in a few days we find quite other men than what the gospels left them ; no longer weak headed, and weak hearted, but able to say that which then they were not able to bear (John xvi. 12.) and bold as lions to face those hardships which then as lambs they trembled at the thought of ; and also with the apostles making the word mighty to the pulling down of Satan's strong holds, which had been before comparatively preached in vain. The commission there granted to the apostles we here find executed, and the powers there lodged in them exerted in miracles wrought on the bodies of people, miracles of mercy, restoring sick bodies to health, and dead bodies to life ; miracles of judgment, striking rebels blind or dead ; and much greater miracles wrought on the minds of people, in conferring spiritual gifts upon them, both of understanding and utterance ; and this in pursuance of Christ's purposes, and in performance of his promises which we had in the gospels. The proofs of Christ's resurrection which the gospels closed with are here abundantly corroborated not only by the constant and undaunted testimony of those that conversed with him after he rose, who had all deserted him, and one of them denied him, and would not otherwise have been rallied again but by his resurrection, but must have been irretrievably dispersed ; and yet by that were enabled to own him more resolutely than ever in defiance of bonds and deaths ; but by the working of the Spirit with that testimony for the conversion of multitudes to the faith of Christ, according to the word of Christ, that his resurrection, the sign of the prophet Jonas, which was reserved to the last, should be the most convincing proof of his divine mission. Christ had told his disciples they should be his witnesses, and this book brings them in witnessing for him ; that they should be fishers of men, and here we have them inclosing multitudes in the gospel net ; that they should be the lights of the world, and here we have the world enlightened by them ; but that day spring from on high which we there discerned the first appearing of, we here find shining more and more. The corn of wheat which there fell to the ground, here springs up and bears much fruit ; the grain of mustard-seed there is here a great tree ; and the kingdom of heaven which was then at hand is here set up. Christ's predictions of the virulent persecutions which the preachers of his gospel should be afflicted with (though one could not have imagined that a doctrine so well worthy of all acceptance should meet with so much opposition) we here find abundantly fulfilled, and also the assurances he gave them of extraordinary supports and comforts under their sufferings. Thus as the latter part of the history of the Old Testament verifies the promises made to the fathers in the former part, as appears by that famous and solemn acknowledgment of Solomon's which runs like a receipt in full, 1 Kings viii. 56. There is not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. So the latter part of the history of the New Testament exactly answers to the word of Christ in the former part of it : And thus they mutually confirm and illustrate each other.*
- II. *As looking forwards to the following epistles, which are an explication of the gospels, which open the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, the history whereof we had in the gospels. This book introduceth them and is a key to them, as the history of David is to David's psalms. We are members of the Christian church, that Tabernacle of God among men, and it is our honour and privilege that we are so. Now this book gives us an account of the framing and rearing of that tabernacle. The four gospels shewed us how the foundation of that house was laid ; this shews us how the superstructure began to be raised. (1.) Among the Jews and Samaritans, which we have an account of in the former part of this book. (2.) Among the Gentiles, which we have an account of in the latter part, from thence and downwards to our own day we find the Christian church building in a visible*

profession of faith in Christ, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, made by his baptized disciples, incorporated into religious societies, stately meeting in religious assemblies, attending on the apostles doctrine, and joining in prayers and breaking of bread, under the conduct and precedency of men that gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, and in a spiritual communion with all in every place that do likewise. Such a body as this there is now in the world, which we belong to, and, to our great satisfaction and honour, in this book we find the rise and original of it, vastly different from the Jewish church, and erected upon its ruins; but undeniably appearing to be of God, and not of man; with what confidence and comfort may we proceed in and adhere to our Christian profession, as far as we find it agrees with this pattern in the mount; to which we ought religiously to conform and confine ourselves?

Two things more are to be observed concerning this book. 1. The penmen of it; It was written by Luke, who wrote the third of the four gospels, which bears his name; and who (as the learned Dr. Whitby shews) was very probably one of the seventy disciples, whose commission (Luke x. 1, &c.) was little inferior to that of the twelve apostles. This Luke was very much a companion of Paul's in his services and sufferings. Only Luke is with me, 2 Tim. iv. 11. We may know by his style in the latter part of this book when and where he was with him, for then he writes we did so and so, as Chap. xvi. 10. xx. 6. and from thenceforward to the end of the book. He was with Paul in his dangerous voyage to Rome, when he was carried thither a prisoner, was with him when from his prison there he wrote his epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, in both which he is named. And it should seem that St. Luke wrote this history when he was with St. Paul at Rome during his imprisonment there, and was assistant to him, for the history concludes with St. Paul's preaching there in his own hired house. 2. The title of it; the Acts of the apostles; of the holy apostles, so the Greek copies generally read it, and so they are called, Rev. xviii. 20. Rejoice over her ye holy apostles. One copy inscribes it, The acts of the apostles by Luke the evangelist. 1. It is the history of the apostles, yet here is in it the history of Stephen, Barnabas, and some other apostolical men, who though not of the twelve yet were indued with the same Spirit, and employed in the same work. And of those that were apostles, it is the history of Peter and Paul only that is here recorded, (and Paul was now of the twelve) Peter the apostle of the circumcision, and Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, Gal. ii. 7. But this sufficeth as a specimen of what the rest did in other places, pursuant to their commission, for they were none of them idle. And as we are to think what is related in the gospels concerning Christ sufficient, because infinite wisdom thought so, the same we are to think here concerning what is related of the apostles, and their labours; for what more is told us from tradition of the labours and sufferings of the apostles, and the churches they planted, is altogether doubtful and uncertain, and what I think we cannot build upon with any satisfaction at all; this is gold, silver, and precious stones built upon the foundation, that is wood, hay, and stubble. 2. It is called their acts, or doings. *Gesta apostolorum*. So some. *Πεζεις*. Their practices of the lessons their Master had taught them. The apostles were active men; and though the wonders they did were by the word, yet they are fitly called their acts; they spake, or rather the Spirit by them spake, and it was done. The history is filled with their sermons and their sufferings, yet so much did they labour in their preaching, and so voluntarily did they expose themselves to sufferings, and such were their achievements by both, that they may very well be called their acts.

C H A P. I.

The inspired historian begins his narrative of the Acts of the apostles, (1.) With a reference to, and a brief recapitulation of his gospel, or history of the life of Christ, inscribing this, as he had done that, to his friend Theophilus, ver. 1, 2. (2.) With a summary of the proofs of Christ's resurrection, and his conference with his disciples, and the instructions he gave them during the forty days of his continuance on earth, ver. 2,—5. (3.) With a particular narrative of Christ's ascension into heaven, his disciples discourse with him before he ascended, and the angels discourse with them after he was ascended, ver. 6,—11. (4.) With a general idea of the embryo of the Christian church, and its state from Christ's ascension to the pouring out of the Spirit, ver. 12,—14. (5.) With a particular account of the filling up of the vacancy that was made in the sacred college by the death of Judas, by the electing of Matthias in his room.

1. **T**HE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles, whom he had chosen, 3. To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4. And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, you have heard of me. 5. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the holy Ghost, not many days hence.

In these verses,

First, Theophilus is put in mind, and we in him, of St. Luke's gospel, which it will be of use for us to cast an eye upon before we enter upon the study of this book, that we may see not only how this begins there where that breaks off, but that as in water face answers to face, so do the acts of the apostles to the acts of their Master, the acts of his grace.

1. His patron to whom he dedicates this book (I should rather say his pupil, for he designs in dedicating it to him, to instruct and direct him, and not to crave his countenance or protection) is Theophilus, ver. 1. In the epistle dedicatory before his gospel, he

had called him *most excellent Theophilus*, here he calls him no more but O Theophilus, not that he had lost his excellency, or that it was diminished and become less illustrious; but either he had now quitted his place, whatever it was, for the sake of which that title was given him; or, he was now grown into years, and despised such titles of respect more than he had done; or, Luke was grown more intimate with him, and therefore could address to him with the more freedom. It was usual with the ancients, both Christian and heathen writers, thus to inscribe their writings to some particular person: But the directing some of the books of the scripture so is an intimation to each of us to receive them, as if directed to us in particular, to us by name, for whatsoever things were written before time, were written for our learning.

2. His gospel is here called the *former treatise which he had made*, which he had an eye to in writing this, intending this for a continuation and confirmation of that, *τὸν πρῶτον λόγον*. The former word. What is written of the gospel is the word as truly as what was spoken; nay, we know no unwritten word that we are to give credit to, but as it agrees with that which is written. He made the former treatise, and now is divinely inspired to make this, for Christ's scholars must go on towards perfection, Heb. vi. 1. And therefore their guides must help them on, must still teach the people knowledge, Eccl. xii. 9. and not think that their former labours, though never so good, will excuse them from further labours; but they should rather be quickened and encouraged by them, as St. Luke here, who because he had laid the foundation in a former treatise, will build upon it in this. Let not this therefore drive out that; let not new sermons and new books make us forget old ones, but put us in mind of them and help us to improve them.

3. The contents of his gospel was, *That, all that which Jesus began both to do and teach*; and the same is the subject of the writings of the other three evangelists. Observe, 1. Christ both did and taught. The doctrine he taught was confirmed by the miraculous works he did, which proved him a *teacher come from God*, John iii. 2. And the duties he taught were copied out in the holy gracious works he did, for he hath left us an example, and that such as proves him a *teacher come from God* too, for by their fruits ye shall know them. Those are the best ministers that both do and teach, whose lives are a constant sermon. 2. He began both to do and teach; he laid the foundation of all that was to be taught and done in the Christian church: His apostles were to carry on and continue what he began, and to do and teach the same things. Christ set them in, and then left them to go on, but sent his Spirit to empower them both to do and teach. It is a comfort to those who

who are endeavouring to carry on the work of the gospel that Christ himself began it. The great salvation at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. 3. The four evangelists, and Luke particularly, have handed down to us *all that Jesus began both to do and to teach*; not all the particulars; the world could not have contained them; but all the heads, samplers of all, so many, and in such variety, as that by them you may judge of the rest. We have the beginnings of his doctrine, *Matt. iv. 17.* and the beginnings of his miracles, *John ii. 11.* Luke had spoken, had treated of all Christ's sayings and doings, had given us a general idea of them, though he had not recorded each in particular.

4. The period of the evangelical story is fixed to the day in which he was taken up, ver. 2. then it was that he left this world, and his bodily presence was no more in it: St. Mark's gospel concludes with the Lord's being received up into heaven, *Mark xvi. 19.* and so doth St. Luke's, *Luke xxiv. 51.* Christ continued doing and teaching to the last, till he was taken up to the other work he had to do within the veil.

Secondly, The truth of Christ's resurrection is maintained and evidenced, ver. 3. That part of what was related in the former treatise was so material, that it was necessary to be upon all occasions repeated: The great evidence of his resurrection was, that he shewed himself alive to his apostles; being alive, he shewed himself so, and he was seen of them: They were honest men, and one may depend upon their testimony; but the question is, whether they were not imposed upon, as many a well-meaning man is: No, they were not; for,

1. The proofs were infallible, *τιμωτα*, plain indications, both that he was alive, he walked and talked with them, he eat and drank with them, and that it was he himself, and not another, for he shewed them again and again the marks of the wounds in his hands, and feet, and side; which was the utmost proof the thing was capable of, or required.

2. They were many, and oft repeated; he was seen by them forty days; not constantly residing with them, but frequently appearing to them, and bringing them by degrees to be fully satisfied concerning it, so that all their sorrow for his departure was done away by it. Christ's staying upon earth so long after he was entered upon his state of exaltation and glory, to confirm the faith of his disciples, and comfort their hearts, was such an instance of condescension and compassion to believers, as may fully assure us, that we have a High-priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Thirdly, A general hint given of the instructions he furnished his disciple with, now he was about to leave them: And they, since he had opened on them, and opened their understandings, were better able to receive them.

1. He instructed them concerning the work they were to do: He gave commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen. Note, Christ's choice is always attended with his charge: Those whom he elected into the apostleship, expected he should give them precepts, but, instead of that, he gave them commandments. When he took his journey, and gave authority to his servants, turns to every one his work, *Mark xiii. 34.* he gave them commandments through the holy Ghost, which he was himself filled with as mediator, and which he had breathed into them. In giving them the holy Ghost, he gave them his commandments; for the Comforter will be a commander; and his office was to bring to their remembrance what Christ had said: He charged those that were apostles by the holy Ghost, so the words are placed: It was their receiving the holy Ghost that sealed their commission, *John xx. 22.* He was not taken up, till after he had given them their charge, and so finished his work.

2. He instructed them concerning the doctrine they were to preach: He spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He had given them a general idea of that kingdom, and the certain time it should be set up in the world, in his parable, *Mark xiii.* but here he let them more into the nature of it; as a kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other; and opened to them that covenant, which is the great charter by which it is incorporated. Now this was intended, 1. To prepare them to receive the holy Ghost, and to go through that which they were designed for. He tells them in secret, what they must tell the world; and they shall find, that the Spirit of truth, when he comes, will say the same. 2. To be one of the proofs of Christ's resurrection; so it comes in here; the disciples, to whom he shewed himself alive, knew that it was he, not only by what he shewed them, but by what he said to them: None but he could speak thus clearly, thus fully, of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He did not entertain them with discourses of politicks, or the kingdoms of men, of philosophy, or the kingdom of nature, but pure divinity, and the kingdom of grace; the things which most nearly concerned them, and those to whom they were sent.

Fourthly, A particular assurance given them, that they should now shortly receive the holy Ghost, with orders given them to expect it, ver. 4, 5. He being assembled together with them, probably, in the interview at the mountain in Galilee, which he had appointed before his death; for there is mention of their coming together again, ver. 6. to attend his ascension. Though he had now ordered them to Galilee, yet they must not think to continue there;

no, they must return to Jerusalem, and not depart thence. Observe,

1. The command he gives them to wait; this was to raise their expectations of something great; and something very great they had reason to expect from their exalted Redeemer. 1. They must wait till the time appointed, which is now not many days hence. They that, by faith, hope promised mercies will come, must, with patience, wait till they do come; according to the times the set time: And when the time draws nigh, as now it did, we must, as Daniel, look earnestly for it, *Dan. ix. 3.* 2. They must wait in the place appointed, in Jerusalem, for there the Spirit must be first poured out, because Christ was to be as king upon the holy hill of Zion; and because the word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem; that must be the mother church: There Christ was put to shame, and therefore there he will have this honour done him; and this favour done to Jerusalem; to teach us, to forgive our enemies and persecutors. The apostles were more exposed to danger at Jerusalem, than they would have been in Galilee; but we may cheerfully trust God with our safety, when we keep in the way of our duty. The apostles were now to put on a publick character, and therefore must venture in a publick station; Jerusalem was the fittest candlestick for those lights to be set up in.

2. The assurance he gives them that they shall not wait in vain; the blessing designed them shall come, and they shall find it was worth waiting for; you shall be baptized with the holy Ghost: That is, 1. The holy Ghost shall be poured out upon you, more plentifully than ever. They had already been breathed upon with the holy Ghost, *John xx. 22.* and they had found the benefit of it; but now they shall have larger measures of his gifts, graces, and comforts, and be baptized with them; where there seems to be an allusion to the Old Testament promises of the pouring out of the Spirit, *Joel ii. 28.* *Isa. xlv. 3.* *xxxii. 15.* 2. Ye shall be cleansed and purified by the holy Ghost, as the priests were baptized and washed with water, when they were consecrated to their sacred function; they had the sign, you shall have the thing signified: You shall be sanctified by the truth, as the Spirit shall lead you more and more into it, and your consciences purged, by the witness of the Spirit, that you may serve the living God in the apostleship. 3. Ye shall hereby be more effectually than ever engaged to your Master, and to his conduct, as Israel was baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; you shall be tied so fast to Christ, that you shall never, for fear of any sufferings, forsake him again, as once you did.

Now this gift of the holy Ghost he speaks of, (1.) As the promise of the Father which they had heard of him, and might therefore depend upon.

1. The Spirit was given by promise, and it was at this time the great promise, as that of the Messiah was before, *Luke i. 72.* and that of eternal life is now, *1 John ii. 25.* Temporal good things are given by providence, but the Spirit, and spiritual blessings, are given by promise, *Gal. iii. 28.* The Spirit of God is not given as the spirit of men is given us, and formed within us by a course of nature, *Zech. xii. 1.* but by the word of God. 1. That the gift may be the more valuable, Christ thought the promise of the Spirit a legacy worth leaving to his church. 2. That it may be the more sure, and that the heirs of promise may be confident of the immutability of God's counsel herein. 3. That it may be of grace, peculiar grace, and may be received by faith, laying hold on the promise, and depending upon it. As Christ, so the Spirit, is received by faith.

2. It was the promise of the Father, of Christ's Father; Christ, as mediator, had an eye to God as his Father, fathering his design, and owning it all along: Of our Father, who, if he give us the adoption of sons, will certainly give us the Spirit of adoption, *Gal. iv. 5.* He will give the Spirit, as the Father of lights, as the Father of spirits, and as the Father of mercies; it is the promise of the Father.

3. This promise of the Father they had heard from Christ many a time, especially in the farewell sermon he preached to them a little before he died, wherein he assured them again and again that the Comforter should come. This confirms the promise of God, and encourageth us to depend upon it, that we have heard it from Jesus Christ; for in him all the promises of God are yea, and amen. You have heard it from me, and I will make it good.

(2.) As the prediction of John baptist; for so far Christ here directs them to look, ver. 5. You have not only heard it from me, but you had it from John; when he turned you over to me, he said, *Matt. iii. 11.* I indeed baptize you with water, but he that comes after me shall baptize you with the holy Ghost. It is a great honour Christ now doth to John, not only to quote his words, but to make this great gift of the Spirit, now at hand, to be the accomplishment of them: Thus he confirms the word of his servants, his messengers, *Isa. xlv. 26.* But Christ can do more than any of his ministers: It is an honour to them to be employed in dispensing the means of grace, but it is his prerogative to give the Spirit of grace: He shall baptize you with the holy Ghost; shall teach you by his Spirit, and give his Spirit to make intercession in you; which is more than the best ministers preaching with us.

Now this *gift of the holy Ghost* thus promised, thus prophesied of, thus waited for, is that which we find the apostles received in the next chapter, for in that this promise had its full accomplishment; that was it *that should come*, and *we look for no other*; for it is here promised to be given *not many days hence*: He doth not tell them how many, because they must keep every day in a frame fit to receive it. Other scriptures speak of *the gift of the holy Ghost* to ordinary believers, this speaks of that particular power, which, by *the holy Ghost*, the first preachers of the gospel, and planters of the church, were endued with, enabling them infallibly to relate to that age, and record to posterity, the doctrine of Christ, and the proofs of it; so that, by virtue of this promise, and the performance of it, we receive the New Testament as of divine inspiration, and venture our souls upon it.

6. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8. But ye shall receive power, after that the holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10. And while they looked stedfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11. Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

In Jerusalem, Christ, by his angel, had appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee; there, he appointed them to meet him in Jerusalem again such a day; thus he would try their obedience, and it was found ready and cheerful; *they came together*, as he appointed them, to be *the witnesses of his ascension*; which here we have an account of. Observe,

First, The question they asked him at this interview. *They came together* to him, as those that had consulted one another about it, and concurred in the question, *nemine contradicente*; *they came* in a body, and put it to him as the sense of the house: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* Two ways this may be taken:

1. Sure *thou wilt* not at all *restore* it to the present rulers of Israel, *the chief priests, and the elders*, that put thee to death, and, to compass that design, tamely gave up the kingdom to Cesar, and owned themselves his subjects! What! Shall those that hate and persecute thee and us, be trusted with power? *That be far from thee*. Or rather,

2. Sure *thou wilt* now *restore* it to the Jewish nation, as far as it will submit to thee as their king! Now two things were amiss in this question:

(1.) Their expectation of the thing itself: They thought Christ would *restore the kingdom to Israel*, i. e. that he would make the nation of the Jews as great and considerable among the nations, as it was in the days of David and Solomon, of Aza and Jehoshaphat; that, as Shiloh, he would *restore the sceptre to Judah, and the lawgiver*; whereas Christ came to set up his own kingdom, and that a kingdom of heaven, not to *restore the kingdom to Israel*, an earthly kingdom. See how apt even good men are to place the happiness of the church too much in external pomp and power! as if Israel were not glorious unless *the kingdom* were *restored* to it, nor Christ's disciples honoured unless they were peers of the realm; whereas we are bid to expect *the cross* in this world, and to wait for *the kingdom* in the other world. See how apt we are to retain what we have imbibed! and how hard it is to get over the prejudices of education! The disciples having sucked in this notion with their milk, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, they were long, before they could be brought to have any idea of his kingdom as spiritual. See also how naturally we are biased in favour of our own people! They thought God would have no kingdom in the world, unless it were *restored to Israel*; whereas *the kingdoms of this world* were to become his, in whom he would be glorified, whether Israel sink or swim. See also how apt we are to misunderstand scripture, and to understand that literally which is spoken figuratively, and to expound scripture by our schemes! whereas we ought to form our schemes by the scriptures: But *when the Spirit shall be poured out* from on high, our mistakes will be rectified, as the apostles soon after were.

(2.) Their enquiry concerning the time of it: *Lord, wilt thou do it at this time?* Now thou hast called us *together*, is it for this purpose, that proper measures may be concerted for *the restoring of the kingdom to Israel*? Sure there cannot be a more favourable juncture than this. Now herein they missed it, 1. That they were inquisitive into that which their Master had never directed or en-

couraged them to enquire into. 2. That they were impatient for the setting up of that kingdom, in which they promised themselves so great a share, and would anticipate the divine counsels. Christ had told them they should *sit on thrones*, Luke xxii. 30. and now nothing will serve them but they must be in *the throne* presently, and cannot stay the time; whereas *he that believeth, doth not make haste*, but is satisfied that God's time is the best time.

Secondly, The check which Christ gave to this question, like that which he had a little before given to Peter's enquiry concerning John, *What is that to thee?* ver. 7. *It is not for you to know the times and seasons*. He doth not contradict their expectation that *the kingdom* would be *restored to Israel*, because that mistake would soon be rectified by *the pouring out of the Spirit*, after which they never had any more thought of the temporal kingdom; and also because there is a sense of the expectation which is true, the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world; and their mistake of *the promise*, shall not make it of *none effect*; but he checks their enquiry after *the time*.

1. The knowledge of this is not allowed to them; *It is not for you to know*, and therefore *it is not for you to ask*. 1. Christ is now parting from them, and parts in love, and yet he gives them this rebuke, which is intended for a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of splitting upon the rock, which was fatal to our first parents, an inordinate desire of forbidden knowledge, and intruding into things which we have not seen, because God has not shewn. *Nescire velle quæ magister maximus docere non vult, erudita inscitia est*. It is folly to covet to be wise above what is written, and wisdom to be content to be no wiser. 2. Christ had given his disciples a great deal of knowledge above others, *to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God*, and had promised them his Spirit to teach them more, now, lest they should be puffed up with the abundance of the revelations, he here let them understand that there were some things which *it was not for them to know*. We shall see how little reason we have to be proud of our knowledge, when we consider how many things we are ignorant of. 3. Christ had given his disciples instructions sufficient for the discharge of their duty, both before his death, and since his resurrection, and this knowledge he will have them to be satisfied in; for it is enough for a Christian, in whom vain curiosity is a corrupt humour, to be mortified, and not gratified. 4. Christ had himself told his disciples *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*, and had promised that *the Spirit should shew them things to come* concerning it, John xvi. 13. He had likewise given them *signs of the times*, which it was their duty to observe, and a sin to overlook, Matt. xxiv. 33. xvi. 3. But they must not expect or desire *to know*, either all the particulars of future events, or the exact times of them. It is good for us to be kept in the dark, and left at uncertainty concerning *the times and moments* (as Dr. Hammond reads it) of future events concerning the church, as well as concerning ourselves; concerning all the periods of time, and the final period of it, as well as concerning the period of our own time. *Prudens futuri temporis exitum caliginosa nocte premit Deus*. Hor. As to *the times and seasons* of the year, we know in general, there will be summer and winter counterchanged, but we know not particularly which day will be fair, or which foul, either in summer or in winter; so, as to our affairs in this world, when it is a summer time of prosperity, that we may not be secure, we are told there will come a winter time of trouble; and in that winter, that we may not despond and despair, we are assured summer will return; but what this or that particular day will bring forth we cannot tell, but must accommodate ourselves to it whatever it is, and make the best of it.

2. The knowledge of it is reserved to God as his prerogative; it is what *the Father hath put in his own power*; it is hid with him: None but he can reveal *the times and seasons* to come; *known unto God are all his works*, but not to us, Acts xv. 18. It is in his power, and in his only, *to declare the end from the beginning*; and by this he proves himself to be God, Isa. xlv. 10. And though he did think fit sometimes to let the Old Testament prophets *know the times and the seasons*, as of the Israelites bondage in Egypt four hundred years, and in Babylon seventy years, yet he has not thought fit to let *you know the times and seasons*, no not just how long it shall be before Jerusalem be destroyed, though you be so well assured of the thing itself. He hath not said, he will not give you *to know* something more than you do of *the times and seasons*; he did do so afterwards *to his servant John*; but he has put it in *his own power* to do it or not, as he thinks fit; and what is in that New Testament prophecy discovered concerning *the times and the seasons*, is so dark, and hard to be understood, that, when we come to apply it, it concerns us to remember this word, that *it is not for us* to be positive in determining *the times and the seasons*. Buxtorf mentions a saying of the Rabbins concerning the coming of the Messiah; *Rumpatur spiritus eorum qui supputant tempora*.

Thirdly, He cuts them out their work, and, with an authority, assures them of an ability to go on with it, and of success in it. *It is not for you to know the times and the seasons*, that will do you no good; but know this, ver. 8. that *you shall receive a spiritual power*, by the descent of *the holy Ghost upon you*, and shall

not

not receive it in vain, for ye shall be witnesses unto me, and my glory and your testimony shall not be in vain, for it shall be received here in Jerusalem, in the country about, and all the world over, ver. 8. If Christ make us serviceable to his honour in our own day and generation, let that be enough for us, and let not us perplex ourselves about times and seasons to come. Christ here tells them,

1. That their work should be honourable and glorious: *You shall be witnesses unto me.* (1.) They shall proclaim him king, and publish those truths to the world, by which his kingdom should be set up, and he would rule. They must openly and solemnly preach his gospel to the world. (2.) They shall prove this, shall confirm their testimony, not as witnesses do, with an oath, but with the divine seal of miracles, and supernatural gifts. *Ye shall be martyrs to me, or, my martyrs,* as some copies read it; for they attested the truth of the gospel with their sufferings, even unto death.

2. That their power for this work should be sufficient: They had not strength of their own for it, not wisdom or courage enough; they were naturally of *the weak and foolish things of this world*, they durst not appear as witnesses for Christ upon his trial, neither as yet were they able: *But ye shall receive the power of the holy Ghost coming upon you* (so it may be read) shall be animated and acted by a better spirit than your own; you shall have power to preach the gospel, and to prove it out of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which, when they were filled with the holy Ghost, they did to admiration, *Acts xviii. 28.* and to confirm it both by miracles, and by their sufferings.

Note, Christ's witnesses shall receive power for that work to which he calls them; whom he employs in his service, he will qualify them for it, and bear them out in it.

3. That their influence should be great, and very extensive: *You shall be witnesses for Christ, and shall carry his cause,* 1. *In Jerusalem;* there you must begin, and many there will receive your testimony; and they that do not, will be left inexcusable. 2. *Your light shall from thence shine throughout all Judea,* where before ye have laboured in vain. 3. *Thence you shall proceed to Samaria,* though at your first mission you were forbidden to preach in any of the cities of the Samaritans. 4. *Your usefulness shall reach to the uttermost part of the earth,* and you shall be blessings to the whole world.

Fourthly, Having left these instructions with them, he leaves them, ver. 9. *When he had spoken these things,* and had said all that he had to say, *he blessed them,* so we were told, *Luke xxiv. 50.* and while they beheld him, and had their eye fixed upon him, receiving his blessing, *he was gradually taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.* We have here Christ's ascending on high; not fetched away, as Elijah was, with a chariot of fire, and horses of fire; but rising to heaven, as he rose from the grave, purely by his own power, his body being now, as the bodies of the saints will be at the resurrection, a spiritual body, and raised in power and incorruption. Observe,

1. He began his ascension in the sight of his disciples, even while they beheld; they did not see him come up out of the grave, because they might see him after he was risen, which would be satisfaction enough; but they saw him go up towards heaven, and had actually their eye upon him, with so much care and intention of mind, that they could not be deceived. It is probable, that he did not fly swiftly up, but moved upwards fair and softly, for the further satisfaction of his disciples.

2. He finished it out of their sight, in a cloud, either a thick cloud, for God said, he would dwell in the thick darkness; or a bright cloud, to signify the splendor of his glorious body: It was a bright cloud that overshadowed him in his transfiguration, and, most probably, this was so, *Matt. xvii. 5.* This cloud received him, it is probable, when he was gone about as far from the earth, as the clouds generally are, yet it was not such a spreading cloud as we commonly see, but such as just served to inclose him: Now he made the clouds his chariot, *Psal. civ. 3.* God had often come down in a cloud, now he went up in one. Dr. Hammond thinks, that the clouds receiving him here, was the angels receiving him; for the appearance of angels is ordinarily described by a cloud, comparing *Exod. xxv. 22.* with *Lev. xvi. 2.* By the clouds there is a sort of a communication kept up between the upper and lower world, in them the vapours are sent up from the earth, and the dews sent down from heaven; fitly therefore doth he ascend in a cloud, who is the mediator between God and man, by whom God's mercies come down upon us, and our prayers come up to him: This was the last that was seen of him, the eyes of a great many witnesses followed him into the cloud, and if we would know what came of him then, we may find, *Dan. vii. 13.* *That one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him in the clouds as he came near before him.*

Fifthly, The disciples, when he was gone out of their sight, yet still continued looking up steadfastly to heaven, ver. 10. and this longer than it was fit they should; and, why so?

1. Perhaps, they hoped that Christ would presently come back to them again, to restore the kingdom to Israel, and were loth to

believe they should now part with him for good and all; so much did they still dote upon his bodily presence, though he had told them, *it was expedient for them, that he should go away!* Or, they look after him, as doubting whether he might not be dropped, as the sons of the prophets thought concerning Elijah, *2 Kings ii. 16.* and so they might have him again.

2. Perhaps, they expected to see some change in the visible heavens now upon Christ's ascension, *that either the sun should be ashamed, or the moon confounded,* *Isa. xxiv. 6.* as being outshone by his lustre: Or, rather, that they should shew some sign of joy and triumph: Or, perhaps, they promised themselves a sight of the glory of the invisible heavens, upon their opening to receive him. Christ had told them, *that hereafter they should see heaven opened,* *John i. 51.* and why should not they expect it now?

Sixthly, Two angels appeared to them, and delivered them a seasonable message from God. There was a world of angels ready to receive our Redeemer, now he made his publick entry into the Jerusalem above; we may suppose these two loth to be absent then; yet, to shew how much Christ had at heart the concerns of his church on earth, he sent two of those, that came to meet him, back to his disciples, who appear as *two men in white apparel*, bright and glistering; for they know, according to the duty of their place, that they are really serving Christ, when they are ministering to his servants on earth. Now we are told what they said to them,

1. To check their curiosity. *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?* He calls them men of Galilee, to put them in mind of the rock out of which they were hewn. Christ had put a great honour upon them, in making them his ambassadors; but they must remember that they are men, earthen vessels, and men of Galilee, illiterate men, looked upon with disdain. Now, say they, *Why stand ye here,* like Galileans, rude and unpolished men, *gazing up into heaven?* What would you see? You have seen all that you were called together to see, and why do ye look any further? *It is stand ye gazing?* as men frightened and perplexed? as men astonished, and at their wits-end? Christ's disciples should never stand at a gaze, because they have a sure rule to go by, and a sure foundation to build upon.

2. To confirm their faith concerning Christ's second coming. Their Master had often told them of that, and the angels are sent at this time seasonably to put them in mind of it, *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, and whom you are looking thus long after, willing you had him with you again, is not gone for ever, for there is a day appointed, in which he will come in like manner thence, as ye have seen him go thence, and you must not expect him back till that appointed day.* (1.) *This same Jesus shall come again in his own person, clothed with this glorious body; this same Jesus, that came once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and appear the second time without sin,* *Heb. ix. 26, 28.* that came once in disgrace to be judged, will come again in glory to judge. *The same Jesus, that has given you your charge, will come again to call you to an account, how you have performed your trust; he, and not another,* *Job xix. 27.* (2.) *He shall come in like manner.* He is gone away in a cloud, and attended with angels; and, behold, he comes in the clouds, and with him an innumerable company of angels! He is gone up with a shout, and with the sound of a trumpet, *Psal. xlvii. 5.* and he will descend from heaven with a shout, and with the trump of God, *1 Thess. iv. 16.* You have now lost the sight of him in the clouds, and in the air; and whether he is gone, you cannot follow him now; but shall then, when you shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. When we stand gazing and trifling, the consideration of our Master's second coming should quicken and awaken us: And when we stand gazing and trembling, the consideration of it should comfort and encourage us.

12. Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-days journey. 13. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper-room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren.

We are here told,

1. From whence Christ ascended; *from the mount of Olivet,* ver. 12. from that part of it where the town of Bethany stood, *Luke xxiv. 50.* There he began his sufferings, *Luke xxii. 39.* and therefore there he rolled away the reproach of them by his glorious ascension, and thus shewed, that his passion and his ascension had the same reference and tendency. Thus would he enter upon his kingdom in the sight of Jerusalem, and of those

undutiful, ungrateful citizens of his, *that would not have him to reign over them.* It was prophesied of him, *Zech. xiv. 4. That his feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, shall stand last there;* and presently it follows, *the mount of Olives shall cleave in two.* From the mount of Olives he ascended who is the good olive-tree, whence we receive the unction, *Zech. iv. 12.* Rom. xi. 24. This mount is here said to be near Jerusalem, a sabbath-day's journey from it, i. e. a little way; no further than devout people used to walk out on a sabbath evening, after the publick worship was over, for meditation; some reckon it a thousand paces, others two thousand cubits; some seven furlongs, others eight. Bethany indeed was fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, John xi. 18. but that part of the mount of Olives which was next to Jerusalem, from whence Christ began to ride in triumph, was but seven or eight furlongs off. The Chaldee paraphrast on *Ruth i. faith, Ifc are commanded to keep the sabbaths, and the holy days, so as not to go above two thousand cubits,* which they build upon *Josh. iii. 4.* where, in their march through Jordan, the space between them and the ark was to be two thousand cubits. God had not then thus limited them, but they limited themselves; and thus far it is a rule to us, not to journey on the sabbath any more than in order to the sabbath work; and as far as is necessary to that, we are not only allowed, but enjoined, *2 Kings iv. 23.*

2. Whither the disciples returned: *They came to Jerusalem,* according to their Master's appointment, though there they were in the midst of enemies; but, it should seem, that though immediately after Christ's resurrection they were watched, and were in fear of the Jews, yet after it was known that they were gone into Galilee, no notice was taken of their return to Jerusalem, nor any further search made for them. God can find out hiding-places for his people in the midst of their enemies, and so influence Saul, that he shall not seek for David any more. At Jerusalem they went up into an upper-room, and there abode; not that they all lodged and dined together in one room, but there they assembled every day, and spent time together in religious exercises, in expectation of the descent of the Spirit. Divers conjectures the learned have about this upper room; some think, it was one of the upper-rooms in the temple; but it cannot be thought that the chief priests, who had the setting and letting of those rooms, would suffer Christ's disciples constantly to reside in any of them: It was said indeed, by the same historian, *that they were continually in the temple,* Luke xxiv. 53. but that was in the courts of the temple, at the hours of prayer, where they could not be hindered from attending; but, it should seem, this upper-room was in a private house. Mr. Gregory of Oxford is of that mind, and quotes a Syriack scholiast upon this place, who faith, that it was the same upper-room in which they had eaten the passover; and though that was called, *ἀνώγειον*, this, *ὑπερῶγειον*, both may signify the same: Whether (saith he) it was in the house of St. John the evangelist, as Euodius delivered, or that of Mary the mother of John Mark, as others have collected, cannot be certain. Notes chap. iii.

3. Who the disciples were that kept together: The eleven apostles are here named, *ver. 13.* so is *Mary the mother of our Lord,* *ver. 14.* and it is the last time that ever any mention is made of her in the scriptures. There were others that are here said to be the brethren of our Lord, *his kinsmen according to the flesh;* and, to make up the hundred and twenty spoken of, *ver. 15.* we may suppose, that all or most of the seventy disciples were with them, that were associates with the apostles, and were employed as evangelists.

4. How they spent their time: *They all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.* Observe,

1. *They prayed, and made supplication.* All God's people are praying people, and give themselves to prayer. It was now a time of trouble and danger with the disciples of Christ, they were as sheep in the midst of wolves; and, *Is any afflicted? let him pray;* that will silence cares and fears. They had now work before them, great work, and before they entered upon it, they were instant in prayer to God for his presence with them in it. Before they were first sent forth, Christ spent time in prayer for them, and now they in prayer for themselves. They were waiting for the descent of the Spirit upon them, and therefore abounded thus in prayer: *The Spirit descended upon our Saviour* when he was praying, *Luke iii. 21.* Those are in the best frame to receive spiritual blessings, that are in a praying frame. Christ had promised now shortly to send the holy Ghost, now that promise was not to supersede prayer, but to quicken and encourage it; God will be enquired of for promised mercies, and the nearer the performance seems to be, the more earnest we should be in prayer for it.

2. *They continued in prayer,* spent much time in it more than ordinary, prayed frequently, and were long in prayer: They never missed an hour of prayer; they resolved to persevere herein till the holy Ghost came, according to the promise; *to pray, and not to faint.* It was said, *Luke xxiv. 53. they were praising and blessing God;* here, that they continued in prayer and supplication; for as praise for the promise is a decent way of begging for the performance, and praise for former mercy of begging further mercy; so, in seeking to God, we give him the glory of that mercy and grace which we have found in him.

3. *They did this with one accord;* that intimates, that they were together in holy love, and there was no quarrel or discord among them; and those who so keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, are best prepared to receive the comforts of the holy Ghost. It also speaks their worthy concurrence in the supplications that were made; though but one spoke, they all prayed: And if when two agree to ask, it shall be done for them, much more when many agree in the same petition: See *Matt. xviii. 19.*

15. ¶ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty) 16. Men and brethren; This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17. For he was numbred with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20. For it is written in the book of psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and, His bishoprick let another take. 21. Wherefore of these men, which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24. And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbred with the eleven apostles.

The sin of Judas was not only his shame and ruin, but it made a gap in the college of the apostles. They were ordained twelve, with an eye to the twelve tribes of Israel, descended from the twelve patriarchs; they were the twelve stars that make up the church's crown, *Rev. xii. 1.* and for them twelve thrones were designed, *Matt. xix. 28.* Now being twelve when they were learners, if they were but eleven when they were to be teachers, it would occasion every one to enquire what was become of the twelfth, and so revive the remembrance of the scandal of their society; and therefore care was taken, before the descent of the Spirit, to fill up the vacancy, which now we have an account of the doing of, our Lord Jesus, probably, having given directions about it, among other things which he spoke pertaining to the kingdom of God. Observe,

First, The persons concerned in this affair.

1. The house consisted of about an hundred and twenty: These were the number of the names, i. e. the persons; some think, the men only, distinguished from the women. Dr. Lightfoot reckons, that the eleven apostles, the seventy disciples, and about thirty nine more, all of Christ's own kindred, country, and concourse, made up this one hundred and twenty, and that these were a sort of synod, or congregation of ministers, a standing presbytery, *Acts iv. 21. to whom none of the rest durst join themselves,* chap. v. 13. and they continued together till the persecution at Stephen's death dispersed them all but the apostles, chap. viii. 1. but he thinks, that besides these there were many hundreds in Jerusalem, if not thousands at this time that believed, and we have indeed read of many that believed on him there, but durst not confess him, and therefore I cannot think, as he doth, that they were now formed into distinct congregations for the preaching of the word, and other acts of worship; nor that there was any thing of that till after the pouring out of the Spirit, and the conversions, in the following chapter. Here was the beginning of the Christian church; this hundred and twenty was the grain of mustard-seed that grew into a tree, the leaven that leavened the whole lump.

2. The speaker was Peter, who had been and still was the most forward man; and therefore notice is taken of his forwardness and zeal to shew that he had perfectly recovered the ground he lost by his denying his Master; and Peter being designed to be the apostle of the circumcision, while the sacred story stays among the Jews he is still brought in, as afterwards when it comes to speak of the Gentiles it keeps to the story of Paul.

Secondly, The proposal which Peter made for the choice of another apostle. He stood up in the midst of the disciples, *ver. 15.* He did not sit down as one that gave laws, or had any supremacy over the rest, but stood up as one that had only a motion to make, in

in which he paid a deference to his brethren, standing up when he spoke to them. Now in his speech we may observe,

1. The account he gives of the vacancy made by the death of Judas, in which he is very particular, and, as became one that Christ had breathed upon, takes notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it. Here is,

(1.) The power to which Judas had been advanced, *ver. 17. he was numbred with us, and had obtained part of this ministry* which we are invested in. Note, Many are numbred with the saints in this world, that will not be found among them in the day of separation between the precious and the vile. What will it avail us to be added to the number of Christians, if we partake not of the spirit and nature of Christians. Judas's having *obtained part of this ministry* was but an aggravation of his sin and ruin, as it will be of theirs who *professed in Christ's name*, and yet were *workers of iniquity*.

(2.) The sin of Judas notwithstanding his advancement to this honour; he was *guide to them that took Jesus*, not only informed Christ's persecutors where they might find him, which they might have done effectually, though he had kept out of sight: But he had the impudence to appear openly at the head of the party that seized him. He went before them to the place, and, as if he had been proud of the honour, gave the word of command, *That same is he, hold him fast*. Note, Ring-leaders in sin are the worst of sinners; especially if those that by their office should have been guides to the friends of Christ, are guides to his enemies.

(3.) The ruin of Judas by this sin; perceiving the chief priests to seek the life of Christ and his disciples, he thought to save his by going over to them, and not only so but to get an estate under them, of which his wages for his service, he hoped, would be but an earnest; but see what came of it.

1. He lost his money shamefully enough; *ver. 18. he purchased a field with the thirty pieces of silver*, which were the reward of his iniquity. He did not purchase the field, but the wages of his unrighteousness did; and it is very elegantly expressed, thus in derision of his projects to enrich himself by this bargain, he thought to have *purchased a field* for himself, as Gehazi did with what he got from Naaman by a lye, see 2 Kings v. 26. but it proved the purchase of a field to bury strangers in; and what the better was he for that? Or any of his? It was to him an unrighteous *mammon*, it deceived him; and the reward of his iniquity was the *stumbling-block of his iniquity*.

2. He lost his life more shamefully. We were told *Mat. xxvii. 5. that he went away in despair*, and was suffocated, so the word signifies there and no more; here it is added (as latter historians add to those who went before) that being strangled or choked with grief and horror, he *fell headlong, fell on his face*, so Dr. Hammond, and partly with the swelling of his own breast, and partly with the violence of the fall, he *burst asunder in the midst*, so that *all his bowels tumbled out*. If when the devil was cast out of a child he *tore him, threw him down, and rent him*, and almost killed him, as we find *Mark ix. 36. Luke ix. 42.* no wonder if when he had full possession of Judas he threw him headlong, and burst him. The suffocating of him which Matthew relates, would make him swell till he burst, which Peter relates. He burst asunder *with a great noise*, so Dr. Edwards, which was heard by the neighbours, and so, as it follows, it came *to be known*, *ver. 19. his bowels gushed out*. Luke writes like a physician, understanding all the entrails of the middle and lower ventricle. Bowelling is part of the punishment of traitors. Justly do those *bowels gush out*, that were shut up against the Lord Jesus. And, perhaps, Christ had an eye to the fate of Judas, when he said of the wicked servant that he would *cut him in sunder*, *Mat. xxiv. 51.*

(4.) The publick notice that was taken of this. *It was known to all the dwellers in Jerusalem*, it was (as it were) put into the news-papers, and was all the talk of the town, as a remarkable judgment of God upon him that betrayed his Master, *ver. 19.* It was not only discoursed of among the disciples, but it was in every body's mouth, and no body disputed the truth of the fact. *It was known*, i. e. it was known to be true, uncontestably so; now one would think this should have awakened those to repentance that had had any hand in the death of Christ, when they saw him that had the first hand thus made an example: But their hearts were hardened, and these of them that were to be softened, it must be done by the word, and the Spirit working with it.

Here is one proof of the notoriety of the thing mentioned, that the field which was purchased with Judas's money was called *aceldama*, the *field of blood*, because it was bought with *the price of blood*, which perpetuated the infamy not only of him that *sold* that innocent precious blood, but of them that *bought* it too. Look how they will answer it, when God shall make inquisition for blood.

(5.) The fulfilling of the scriptures in this, which had spoken so plainly of this, *that it must needs be fulfilled*, *ver. 16.* let none be surprized or stumble at it, that this should be the exit of one of the twelve, for David had foretold not only his sin, which Christ had taken notice of, *John xiii. 18. from Psal. xli. 9.* He that *eateth bread with me, hath lift up the heel against me*, but had also foretold,

1. His punishment, *Psal. lxxix. 25. Let his habitation be desolate*, that psalm refers to the Messiah, mention was made but two or three

verses before of their giving him *gall and vinegar*, and therefore the following predictions of the destruction of David's enemies must be applied to the enemies of Christ, and particularly to Judas. Perhaps he had some habitation of his own at Jerusalem, which upon this every body was afraid to live in, and so it became desolate. This prediction signifies the same with that of Bildad concerning the wicked man, that his *confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle and shall bring him to the king of terrors, it shall dwell in his tabernacle because it is none of his, brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.* *Job xviii. 14, 15.*

2. The substitution of another in his room. His bishoprick, or his office, for so the word signifies in general, *shall another take*, which is quoted from *Psal. cix. 8.* With this quotation Peter very aptly introduceth the following proposal. Note, We are not to think the worse of any office that God has instituted, whether magistracy or ministry, either for the wickedness of any that are in that office, or for the ignominious punishment of that wickedness; nor will God suffer any purpose of his to be frustrated, any commission of his to be vacated, or any work of his to be undone, for the miscarriages of them that are intrusted therewith; *The unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect*, Judas is hanged, but his bishoprick is not lost. It is said of his *habitation*, that *no man shall dwell therein*, there he shall have no heir, but it is not said so of his bishoprick, there he shall not want a successor; it is with the officers of the church as with the members of it, if the *natural branches be broken off*, others shall be *grafted in*, *Rom. xi. 17.* Christ's cause shall never be lost for want of witnesses.

2. The motion he makes for the choice of another apostle, *ver. 21, 22.* where observe,

1. How the person must be qualified that must fill up the vacancy; it must be one of *these men*, these seventy disciples that have *companied with us*, that have constantly attended us *all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, preaching and working miracles for three years and a half, *beginning from the baptism of John*, which the gospel of Christ commenced from, *unto that same day that he was taken up from us*. Those that have been diligent and faithful, and constant in the discharge of their duty of a lower station, are fittest to be preferred to a higher; that have been faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more. And none should be employed as ministers of Christ, preachers of his gospel, and rulers in his church, but those that are well acquainted with his doctrine and doing, from first to last. None shall be an apostle but one that has companied with the apostles, and that continually; nor that has visited them now and then, but been intimately conversant with them.

2. To what work he is called that must fill up the vacancy; he must be a *witness with us of his resurrection*. By this it appears that others of the disciples were with the eleven when Christ appeared to them, else they could not have been *witnesses with them*, as competent witnesses as they of his resurrection. The great thing which the apostles were to attest to the world was *Christ's resurrection*, for that was the great proof of his being the Messiah, and the foundation of our hope in him. See what the apostles were ordained to, not to a secular dignity and dominion, but to *preach Christ*, and the *power of his resurrection*.

Thirdly, The nomination of the person that was to succeed Judas in his office as an apostle.

1. Two, who were known to have been Christ's constant attendants, and men of great integrity, were set up as candidates for the place, *ver. 23. They appointed two*; not the *eleven*, they did not take upon them to determine who should be put up, but the *hundred and twenty*, for to them Peter spoke and not to the eleven. The two they nominated were Joseph and Matthias, of neither of whom we do read elsewhere, except this Joseph be the same with that Jesus which is called Justus, whom Paul speaks of, *Col. iv. 11.* and who is said to be *of the circumcision*, a native Jew, as this was; and who was a *fellow-worker with Paul unto the kingdom of God* and a comfort to him; and then it is observable that though he came short of being an apostle, he did not therefore quit the ministry, but was very useful in a lower station; for, *Are all apostles? Are all prophets?* Some think this Joseph is he that is called Josias, *Mark vi. 3. the brother of James the less*, *Mark xv. 40.* and was called *Josias the just*, as he was called *James the just*. Some confound this with that Josias mentioned *Acts iv. 36.* But that was of Cyprus, this of Galilee; and, it should seem, to distinguish them, that was called *Barnabas*, a *son of consolation*, this *Barjabas*, a *Son of the oath*. These two were both of them such worthy men, and so well qualified for the office, that they could not tell which of them was fittest, but all agreed it must be one of them two. They did not propose themselves, nor strive for the place, but humbly sat still and were appointed to it.

2. They applied themselves to God by prayer for direction, not which of the seventy, for none of the rest could stand in competition with these in the opinion of all present, but *which of these two?* *ver. 24, 25.*

1. They appeal to God as the searcher of hearts, *Thou Lord which knowest the hearts of all men*, which we do not, and better than they know their own. Observe, when an apostle was to be chosen, he must be chosen by his heart, and the temper and disposition of that. Yet Jesus, who knew all mens hearts, for wise and holy

holy ends, chose Judas to be one of the twelve. It is comfortable to us in our prayers for the welfare of the church and its ministers, that the God we pray to, *knows the hearts of all men*, and hath them not only under his eye, but in his hand and turns them which way soever he will; can make them fit for his purpose, if he do not find them so, by giving them *another Spirit*.

2. They desire to know, *Which of these God hath chosen*; Lord, *shew us that*, and we are satisfied. It is fit God should choose his own servants; and so far as he any way, by the disposals of his providence, or the gifts of his Spirit, shews *whom he hath chosen*, or what he hath chosen for us, we ought to comply with him.

3. They are ready to receive him as a brother, whom God hath chosen; for they are not contriving to have so much the more dignity themselves, by keeping out another, but desire to have one to *take part of this ministry and apostleship*, to join with us in the work, and share with us in the honour, *from which Judas by transgression fell*, threw himself, by deserting and betraying his Master, *from the place of an apostle*, which he was unworthy of, that he might go to his own place, the place of a traitor, the fittest place for him, not only to the gibbet, but to hell; that was his own place. Note, Those that betray Christ, as they fall from the dignity of relation to him, so they fall into all misery. It is said of Balaam, *Numb. xxiv. 14, 15*. That he went to his own place, that is, says one of the Rabbins, he went to hell. Dr. Winthby quotes Ignatius saying, there is appointed to every man *ἰδίος τόπος*, a proper place, which speaks the same with that of God's rendering to every man according to his works. And our Saviour has said, that *Judas's own place* should be such, as that it had been better for him he had never been born, *Matth. xxvi. 24*. his misery such, as to be worse than not being. Judas had been an hypocrite, and hell is the proper place of such; other sinners, as inmates, have their portion with them, *Mat. xxv. 51*.

4. The doubt was determined by lot, *ver. 26*. which is an appeal to God, and lawful to be used for the determining matters not otherwise determinable, provided it be done in a solemn, religious manner, and with prayer, the prayer of faith; for *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord*, *Prov. xvi. 33*. Matthias was not ordained by the imposition of hands, as presbyters were, for he was chosen by lot, which was the act of God; and therefore as he must be baptised, so he must be ordained by the holy Ghost, as they all were not many days after. Thus the number of the apostles was made up, as afterwards when James, another of the twelve, was martyred, Paul was made an apostle.

CHAP. II.

*Between the promise of the Messiah's coming, (even the latest of these promises) and his coming, many ages intervened; but between the promise of the Spirit, and his coming, there were but a few days; and during those days, the apostles, though they had received orders to preach the gospel to every creature, and to begin at Jerusalem; yet lay perfectly wind-bound, incognito, and not offering to preach: But in this chapter the north-wind and the south-wind awake, and then they awake, and we have them in the pulpit properly. Here is, (1.) The descent of the Spirit upon the apostles, and those that were with them, on the day of pentecost, *ver. 1—4*. (2.) The various speculations which this occasioned among the people that were now met in Jerusalem from all parts, *ver. 5—13*. (3.) The sermon which Peter preached to them hereupon, wherein he shews, that this pouring out of the Spirit, was the accomplishment of an Old Testament promise, *ver. 14—21*. That it was a confirmation of Christ's being the Messiah, which was already proved by his resurrection, *ver. 21—32*. And that it was a fruit and evidence of his ascension into heaven, *ver. 33—36*. (4.) The good effect of this sermon in the conversion of many to the faith of Christ, and their addition to the church, *ver. 37—41*. (5.) The devout piety and charity of these primitive Christians, and the manifest tokens of God's presence unto them, and power in them, *ver. 42—47*.*

1. **A**ND when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4. And they were all filled with the holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We have here an account of the descent of the holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ. Observe,

First, When and where this was done, which is particularly noted for the greater certainty of the thing.

1. It was *when the day of pentecost was fully come*. Where there seems to be a reference to the manner of the expression in the institution of this feast, where it is said, *Lev. xxiii. 13*. Ye shall count unto you *seven sabbaths compleat*, from the day of the offering of the

first-fruits, which was the next day but one after the passover, the sixteenth day of the month Abib, which was the day that Christ rose. This day was *fully come*, i. e. The night preceding, with a part of the day, was fully past.

1. The holy Ghost came down at the time of a *solemn feast*, because there was then a great concourse of people to Jerusalem from all parts of the country; and of profelytes from other countries, which would make it the more publick, and the fame of it to be spread the sooner and further, which would contribute much to the propagating of the gospel into all nations. Thus now, as before at the passover, the Jewish feasts served to toll the bell for gospel services and entertainments.

2. This feast of pentecost was kept in remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, from whence the incorporating of the Jewish church was to be dated, which Dr. Lightfoot reckons to be just one thousand four hundred and forty seven years before this. Fitly, therefore, is the holy Ghost given at this feast, in fire, and in tongues, for the promulgation of the evangelical law, not as that, to one nation, but to *every creature*.

3. This feast of pentecost happened on the *first day of the week*, which was an additional honour put on that day, and a confirmation of it to be the Christian sabbath, *the day which the Lord hath made*, to be a standing memorial in his church of those two great blessings, the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on that day of the week. This serves not only to justify us in observing that day under the style and title of *the Lord's day*; but to direct us in the sanctifying of it to give God praise particularly for those two great blessings; every Lord's day in the year, I think, there should be a full and particular notice taken in our prayers and praises of these two, as there is by some churches of the one, once a year, upon *Easter day*, and of the other, once a year, upon *Whitunday*; O that we may do it with suitable affections!

2. It was when they were *all with one accord in one place*. What place it was, we are not told particularly, whether in the temple, where they attended at publick times, *Luke xxiv. 53*. or, whether in their own upper-room, where they met at other times. But it was at Jerusalem, because it had been the place which God chose to put his name there, and the prophecy was, that *from thence* the word of the Lord should go forth to all nations, *Isa. li. 3*. And it was now the place of the general rendezvous of all devout people; there God had promised to meet them and bless them, here therefore he meets them with this blessing of blessings. Though Jerusalem had done the utmost dishonour imaginable to Christ, yet he did this honour to Jerusalem, to teach us not to fall out with places, nor conceive prejudices against them; for God has his remnant in all places, he had so in Jerusalem.

Here they were in one place, and they were not as yet so many, but that one place, and no large one, would hold them all. And here they were *with one accord*. We cannot forget how often while their Master was with them, there were *strifes among them which should be greatest*; but now all these strifes were at an end, we hear no more of them; what they had received already of the holy Ghost when Christ breathed on them, had in a good measure rectified the mistakes upon which those contests were grounded, and had disposed them to holy love. They had prayed more together of late than usual, *chap. i. 14*. and that made them love one another better. By his grace he thus prepared them for the gift of the holy Ghost; for that blessed dove comes not where there is noise and clamour, but moves upon the face of the still waters, not the rugged ones. Would we have the Spirit poured out upon us from on high, let us be all *of one accord*, and notwithstanding variety of sentiments and interests, as no doubt there was among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for where *brethren dwell together in unity*, there it is that *the Lord commands his blessing*.

Secondly, How, and in what manner the holy Ghost came upon them. We often read in the Old Testament of God's coming down in a cloud; as when he took possession of the tabernacle first, and afterwards of the temple, which intimates the darkness of that dispensation. And Christ went up to heaven in a cloud, to intimate how much we are kept in the dark concerning the upper world: But the holy Ghost did not descend in a cloud; for he was to dispel and scatter the clouds that overspread mens minds, and to bring light into the world.

1. Here is an audible summons given them to awaken their expectations of something great, *ver. 1*. It is here said, 1. That it came suddenly, did not rise gradually as common winds do, but was at the height immediately. It came sooner than they expected, and startled even them that were now together waiting, and probably employed in some religious exercises. 2. It was a *sound from heaven*, like a thunder-clap, *Rev. vi. 1*. God is said to *bring the winds out of his treasures*, *Psal. xxxv. 7*. And to *gather them in his hands*, *Prov. xxx. 4*. From him this sound came, like the voice of one crying, *prepare ye the way of the Lord*. 3. It was the sound of a wind, for the *way of the Spirit*, is like that of *the wind*, *John iii. 8*.
thou

thou *hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes, or whither it goes.* When the Spirit of life is to enter into the dry bone, the prophet is bid to *prophecy unto the wind, come from the four winds, O breath,* Ezek. xxxvii. 9. And though it was not in the wind that the Lord came to Elijah, yet that prepared him to receive his discovery of himself in the *still small voice,* 1 King xix. 11, 12. *God's way is in the whirlwind and the storm,* Nah. i. 3. And out of the whirlwind he spoke to Job. 4. It was a *rushing mighty wind*; it was strong and violent, and came not only with a great noise, but with a great force, as if it would bear down all before it: This was to signify the powerful influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, and thereby upon the world, that they should be mighty through God to the casting down of imaginations. 5. It filled not only the room, but all the house where they were sitting. Probably, it alarmed the whole city, but to shew that it was supernatural, presently fixed upon that particular house, as some think the wind that was sent to arrest Jonah, affected only the ship that he was in, John i. 4. And as the wise men star stood over the house where the child was: And this would direct the people who observed it, whither to go to enquire the meaning of it. This wind filling the house, would strike an awe upon the disciples, and help to put them into a very serious, reverend, and composed frame, for the receiving of the holy Ghost. Thus the convictions of the Spirit make way for his comforts: And the rough blasts of that blessed wind, prepare the soul for its soft and gentle gales.

2. Here is a visible sign of the gift they were to receive. They saw *cloven tongues, like as of fire,* ver. 3. and it sat, *ἐκάθισεν*, not they sat, those cloven tongues, but he, i. e. the Spirit signified thereby, rested upon each of them, as he is said to rest upon the prophets of old. Or, as Dr. Hammond describes it, "There was an appearance of something like flaming fire, lighting on every one of them, which divided asunder, and so formed the resemblance of tongues, with that part of them that was next their heads divided or cloven". The flame of a candle is somewhat like a tongue: And there is a meteor which naturalists call *ignis lambens*, not a devouring fire; such was this. Observe,

1. There was an outward sensible sign, for the confirming of the faith of the disciples themselves, and for the convincing of others. Thus the prophets of old had frequently their first mission confirmed by signs, that all Israel might know them to be established prophets.

2. The sign given was fire, that John baptist's saying concerning Christ might be fulfilled, *He shall baptize you with the holy Ghost and with fire*; with the holy Ghost, as with fire. They were now in the feast of pentecost celebrating the memorial of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, and as that was given in fire, and therefore is called a *fiery law*, so is the gospel. Ezekiel's mission was confirmed by a vision of *burning coals of fire*, chap. xiii. and Isaiah's by a *coal of fire* touching his lips, chap. vi. 7. The Spirit like fire melts the heart, separates and burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul, in which, as in the fire upon the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up. This is that fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, Luke xii. 49.

3. This fire appeared in *cloven tongues*. The operations of the Spirit were many, that of speaking with divers tongues was one, and was singled out to be the first indication of the gift of the holy Ghost, and to that this sign had a reference. 1. They were tongues, for from the Spirit we have the word of God, and by him Christ would speak to the world; and he gave the Spirit to the disciples, not only to endue them with knowledge, but to endue them with a power to publish and proclaim to the world what they knew; for the dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 2. These tongues were cloven, to signify that God would hereby divide unto all nations the knowledge of his grace, as he is said to have divided to them by his providence the light of the heavenly bodies, Deut. iv. 19. The tongues were divided, and yet they still continued all of one accord; for there may be a sincere unity of affections, where yet there is a diversity of expression. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that the dividing of tongues at Babel, was the casting off of the heathen; for when they had lost the language in which alone God was spoken of and preached, they utterly lost the knowledge of God and religion, and fell into idolatry. But now after above two thousand years, God, by another dividing of tongues, restores the knowledge of himself to the nations.

4. This fire sat upon them for some time, to shew the constant residence of the holy Ghost with them. The prophetick gifts of old were conferred sparingly, and but at some times, but the disciples of Christ, had the gifts of the Spirit always with them; though the sign, we may suppose, presently disappeared. Whether these flames of fire passed from one to another, or whether there were as many flames as there were persons, is not certain: But they must be strong and bright flames, that would be visible in the day-light, as it now was, for the day was fully come.

Thirdly, What was the immediate effect of this. 1. They were all filled with the holy Ghost, more plentifully and powerfully than

they were before. They were filled with the graces of the Spirit, and were more than ever under his sanctifying influences; were now holy, and heavenly, and spiritual; more weaned from this world, and better acquainted with the other. They were more filled with the comforts of the Spirit, rejoiced more than ever in the love of Christ, and the hope of heaven, and in it all their griefs and fears were swallowed up. They were also for the proof of this, filled with the gifts of the holy Ghost, which is especially meant here: They were endued with miraculous powers, for the furtherance of the gospel. It seems evident to me, that not the twelve apostles only, but all the hundred and twenty disciples, were filled with the holy Ghost alike at this time: All the seventy disciples who were apostolical men, and imployed in the same work, and all the rest too that were to preach the gospel; for it is said expressly, Eph. iv. 8, 11. *That when Christ ascended on high, (which refers to this here, ver. 33.) he gave gifts unto men,* not only some apostles, such were the twelve; but some prophets, and some evangelists, such were many of the seventy disciples, itinerant preachers, and some pastors and teachers settled in particular churches, as we may suppose some of these afterwards were. The all here, must refer to the all that were together, chap. i. 15. v. 1.

2. They began to speak with other tongues, besides their native language, though they had never learned any other: They spake not matters of common conversation, but the word of God, and the praises of his name, as the Spirit gave them utterance, or gave them to speak, *ἐκφραγεῖς* to speak apophthegms, substantial and weighty sayings, worthy to be had in remembrance. It is probable, it was not only one that was enabled to speak one language, and another another, as it was with the several families that were dispersed from Babel; but every one was enabled to speak divers languages, as he should have occasion to use them: And we may suppose, that they not only understood themselves but understood one another too, which the builders of Babel did not, Gen. xi. 7. They did not speak here and there a word of another tongue, or stammer out some broken sentences; but spoke it as readily, properly, and elegantly, as if it had been their mother-tongue; for whatever was produced by miracle, was the best of the kind. They spake not from any previous thought or meditation, but as the Spirit gave them utterance, he furnished them with the matter as well as the language. Now this was, 1. A very great miracle, it was a miracle upon the mind, (and so had most of the nature of a gospel miracle) for in the mind words are framed. They had not only never learned these languages, but had never learned any foreign tongue, which might have facilitated these; nay, for ought appears, they had never so much as heard these languages spoken, or had any idea of them: They were neither scholars, nor travellers; nor had had any opportunity of learning languages, either by books or conversation: Peter, indeed, was forward enough to speak in his own tongue; but the rest of them were no spokesmen, nor were they quick of apprehension; yet now not only the heart of the rash understands knowledge, but the tongue of the stammerers is ready to speak elegantly, Isa. xxxii. 4. When Moses complained, *I am slow of speech*; God said, *I will be with thy mouth*, and Aaron shall be thy spokesman. But he did more for these messengers of his; he that made man's mouth, new made theirs. 2. A very proper, needful, and servicable miracle: The language the disciples spoke was Syriack, a dialect of the Hebrew; so that it was necessary they should be endued with the gift, both for the understanding of the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, in which it was written; and of the original Greek of the New Testament in which it was to be written. But that was not all, they were commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature, to disciple all nations. But here is an insuperable difficulty at the threshold; how shall they master the several languages so as to speak intelligibly to all the nations, it will be the work of a man's life to learn their languages. And therefore, to prove that Christ could give authority to preach to the nations, he gives ability to preach to them in their own language. And it should seem, that this was the accomplishment of that promise which Christ made to his disciples, John xiv. 12. *Greater works than these shall ye do*: For this may well be reckoned, all things considered, a greater work than the miraculous cures Christ wrought; Christ himself did not speak with other tongues, nor did he enable his disciples to do it, while he was with them; but it was the first effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon them. And archbishop Tillotson thinks it probable, that if the conversion of infidels to Christianity, were now sincerely and vigorously attempted by men of honest minds, God would extraordinarily countenance such an attempt with all fitting assistance, as he did the first publication of the gospel.

5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? 8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein

wherein we were born ? 9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this ? 13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

We have here an account of the publick notice that was taken of this extraordinary gift, with which the disciples were all on a sudden endued. Observe,

First, The great concourse of people that there was now at Jerusalem ; it should seem more than usually was at the feast of pentecost. *There were dwelling or abiding at Jerusalem*, Jews, that were *devout men*, disposed to religion, and that had the fear of God before their eyes, so the word properly signifies, some of them *proselytes of righteousness*, that were circumcised, and admitted members of the Jewish church, others only *proselytes of the gate*, that forsook idolatry, and gave up themselves to the worship of the true God, but not to the ceremonial law ; some of those there were at Jerusalem now, *out of every nation under heaven*, whither the Jews were dispersed, or, from whence proselytes were come. The expression is hyperbolical, noting, that there were some from most of the then known parts of the world ; as much as ever Tyre was, or London is the rendezvous of trading people from all parts, Jerusalem at that time was of religious people from all parts. Now,

1. We may here see what were some of those countries whence those strangers came, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* some from the Eastern countries, as the *Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia*, the posterity of Shem ; from thence we come in order to Judea, which ought to be mentioned, because though the language of them in Judea was the same with that which the disciples spoke, yet, before, they spoke it with the north-country tone and dialect, *Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech bewrays thee*, but now they spoke it as fine as the inhabitants of Judea themselves did : Next come the inhabitants of Cappadocia, Pontus, and that country about Propontis, which was particularly called Asia, and these were the countries in which those strangers were scattered, to whom St. Peter writes, *1 Pet. i. 1.* Next come the dwellers in Phrygia, and Pamphylia, which lay westward, the posterity of Japhet, as were also the strangers of Rome ; there were some also that dwelt in the Southern parts of Egypt, in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, there were also some from the Island of Crete, and some from the deserts of Arabia ; but they were all either Jews originally, dispersed into those countries ; or proselytes to the Jewish religion, but natives of those countries. Dr. Whitby observes, that the Jewish writers about this time, as Philo and Josephus speak of the *Jews as dwelling every where through the whole earth* ; and that *there is not a people upon earth among whom some Jews do not inhabit*.

2. We may enquire, what brought all those Jews and proselytes together to *Jerusalem at this time* ; not to make a transient visit thither to the feast of pentecost, for they are said to dwell there ; they took lodgings there, because there was at this time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messiah ; for Daniel's weeks were just now expired, the scepter was departed from Judah, it was then generally thought that *the kingdom of God should immediately appear*, Luke xv. 11. This brought those who were most zealous and devout to Jerusalem, to sojourn there, that they might have an early share in the kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings of that kingdom.

Secondly, The amazement which these strangers were seized with when they heard the disciples speak to them in their own tongues. It should seem the disciples spoke in various languages before the people of those languages came to them ; for it is intimated, *ver. 6.* that the spreading of the report of this abroad was it that *brought the multitude together*, especially those of different countries, who seem to have been more affected with this work of wonder than the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves.

1. They observe that the speakers are all Galileans, that know no other but their mother tongue, *ver. 7.* they are despicable men, from whom nothing learned or polite is to be expected. God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. Christ was thought to be a Galilean, and his disciples really were so ; unlearned and ignorant men.

2. They acknowledged that they spoke intelligibly, and readily, their own language, which they were the most competent judges of, so right and exact, that none of their own countrymen could speak it better. *We hear every man in our own tongue where-in we were born*, *ver. 8. i. e.* we hear one or other of them speak our native language. The Parthians hear one of them speak their language, the Medes hear another of them speak theirs ; and so of the rest, *ver. 11.* *We do hear them speak in our tongue*

the wonderful works of God. Their respective languages were not only unknown at Jerusalem, but probably despised and undervalued, and therefore it was not only a surprize, but a pleasing surprize to them to hear the language of their own country spoken, as it naturally is to those that are strangers in a strange land.

(1.) The things they heard the apostles discourse of were the *wonderful works of God*, *μεγαλὰ τῷ Θεῷ*, *Magnalia Dei*, the great things of God. It is likely the apostles spoke of Christ and redemption by him, and the grace of the gospel, and these are indeed the *great things of God*, and which will be for ever *marvellous in our eyes*.

(2.) They heard them both praise God for these great things, and instruct the people concerning these things *in their own tongue*, according as they perceived the language of their hearers, or those that enquired of them to be. Now though, perhaps, by dwelling some time at Jerusalem, they were got to be so much masters of the Jewish language as that they could have understood the meaning of the disciples, if they had spoken that language, yet, (1.) This was more strange, and helped to convince their judgment, that this doctrine was of God ; for *tongues were for a sign* to them that believed not, *1 Cor. xiv. 22.* (2.) It was more kind and helped to engage their affections, as it was a plain indication of the favour intended to the Gentiles, and that the knowledge and worship of God should no longer be confined to the Jews, but the partition wall should be broken down, and this is to us a plain intimation of the mind and will of God, that the sacred records of God's wonderful works should be preserved by all nations *in their own tongues*. That the scriptures should be read, and publick worship performed in the vulgar languages of the nations.

3. They wonder at it, and look upon it as an astonishing thing, *ver. 12.* *They were all amazed*, they were in an *ecstasy*, so the word is ; and they were in doubt what the meaning of it was, and whether it was to introduce the kingdom of the Messiah, which they were big with the expectation of ; they asked themselves, and one another *τί ἂν θεοὶ τῷτο ἔναι*, *quid hoc sibi vult ?* What is the tendency of this ? Surely it is to dignify, and so to distinguish these men as messengers from heaven, and therefore like Moses at the bush, they will *turn aside and see this great sight*.

Thirdly, The scorn which some made of it, who were natives of Judea and Jerusalem, probably the Scribes and Pharisees, and chief priests, who always resisted the holy Ghost, they said, *these men are full of new wine, or sweet wine*, they have drunk too much this festival time, *ver. 13.* Not that they were so absurd as to think, that wine in the head would enable men to speak languages which they never learned, but these being native Jews knew not as the others did, that these were really the languages of other nations, and therefore took what they said to be gibberish and nonsense, such as drunkards, those *fools in Israel* sometimes talk. As when they resolved not to believe the *finger of the Spirit* in Christ's miracles, they turned it off with this, he casteth out devils by compact with the prince of the devils ; so when they resolved not to believe the *voice of the Spirit* in the apostles preaching, they turned it off with this, these men are full of new wine. And if they called the Master of the house a wine-bibber, no marvel if they so call them of his household.

14. ¶ But Peter standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words : 15. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, 17. And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ; and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : 18. And on my servants, and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy : 19. And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. 20. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. 21. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. 22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God, among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know : 23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain : 24. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. 25. For David speaketh concerning him, I fore-

forefaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. 26. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope. 27. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption. 28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day: 30. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ, to sit on his throne: 31. He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35. Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

We have here *the first-fruits of the Spirit* in the sermon which Peter preached immediately, directed not to those of other nations in a strange language, we are not told what answer he gave to those that were amazed, and said, *What meaneth this?* but to the Jews in the vulgar language, even to them that mocked, for he begins with the notice of that, *ver. 15.* and addresseth his discourse, *ver. 14.* to the men of Judea, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; but we have reason enough to think that the other disciples continued to speak to those who understood them, and therefore flocked about them, in the languages of their respective countries, *the wonderful works of God.* And it was not by Peter's preaching only, but that of all, or most of the rest of the hundred and twenty, that the three thousand souls were that day converted, and added to the church; but Peter's sermon only is recorded to be an evidence for him that he was thoroughly recovered from his fall, and thoroughly restored to the divine favour; he that had sneakingly denied Christ, now as courageously confesseth him. Observe,

1. His introduction or preface, wherein he craves the attention of the auditory, or demands it rather. *Peter stood up*, *ver. 14.* (to shew that he was not drunk) *with the eleven*, who concurred with him in what he said, and, probably, in their turns, spoke likewise to the same purpose; they that were of greatest authority stood up to speak to the scoffing Jews, and to confront those who contradicted and blasphemed, but left the seventy disciples to speak to the willing proselytes from other nations, who were not so prejudiced, in their own language. Thus, among Christ's ministers, some, of greater gifts, are called out to instruct those that oppose themselves to take hold of sword and spear; others, of meaner abilities, are employed in instructing those that resign themselves, and to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. *Peter lift up his voice*, as one that was both well assured of, and much affected with what he said; and was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it. He applied himself to the men of Judea, *Ἰουδαῖοι*, the men that were Jews, so it should be read; and you especially that dwell at Jerusalem, who were accessory to the death of Jesus, be this known unto you, which you did not know before, and which you are concerned to know now, and to hearken to my words, who would draw you to Christ, and not to the words of the Scribes and Pharisees, that would draw you from him. My Master is gone, whose words you have often heard in vain, but shall hear no more as you have done, but he speaks to you by us, *hearken now to our words.*

2. His answer to their blasphemous calumny, *ver. 15.* *These men are not drunken, as you suppose.* These disciples of Christ, that now speak with other tongues, they speak good sense, and know what they say, and so do these they speak to, who are led by their discourses into the knowledge of the wonderful works of God. You cannot think they are drunk, for it is but the third hour of the day, nine of the clock in the morning; and before that time, on the sabbaths and solemn feasts, the Jews did not use to eat or drink: Nay, ordinarily they that are drunk, are drunk in the night, and not in the morning: Those are befotted drunkards indeed, that, when they are awake, presently seek it yet again, *Prov. xxiii. 35.*

3. His account of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, which is designed to awaken them all to embrace the faith of Christ, and to join themselves to his church. Two things he resolves it into; that it was the fulfilling of the scripture, and the fruit of

Christ's resurrection and ascension, and, consequently, the proof of both.

First, That it was the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and therefore an evidence that that kingdom is come, and the other predictions of it are fulfilled. He instanceth in one, that of the prophet Joel, chap. ii. 28. It is observable, that though Peter was filled with the holy Ghost, and spake with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not set aside the scriptures, nor think himself above them; nay, much of his discourse is quotations out of the Old Testament, to which he appeals, and with which he proves what he saith: Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible, and the Spirit is given, not to supersede the scriptures, but to enable us to understand and improve the scriptures. Observe,

1. The text itself that Peter quotes, *ver. 17,—21.* It refers to the last days, i. e. the times of the gospel, which are therefore called the last days, because the dispensation of God's kingdom among men, which the gospel sets up, is the last dispensation of divine grace, and we are to look for no other, but the continuation of that to the end of time. Or, in the last days, i. e. a great while after the ceasing of prophecy in the Old Testament church. Or, in the days immediately preceding the destruction of the Jewish nation, in the last days of that people, just before that great and notable day of the Lord, spoken of, *ver. 20.* it was prophesied of and promised, and therefore you ought to expect it, and not to be surprized at it, to desire it, and bid it welcome, and not to dispute it, as not worth taking notice of. The apostle quotes the whole paragraph, for it is good to take the scripture intire; now it was foretold,

(1.) That there should be a more plentiful and extensive effusion of the Spirit of grace from on high, than had been ever yet. The prophets of the Old Testament had been filled with the holy Ghost, and it was said of the people of Israel, that God gave them his good Spirit to instruct them, *Neh. ix. 20.* But now the Spirit shall be poured out, not only upon the Jews, but upon all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, though yet Peter himself did not understand it so, as appears, *Acts xi. 17.* Or, upon all flesh, i. e. upon some of all ranks and conditions of men. The Jewish doctors taught, that the Spirit came only upon wise and rich men, and such as were of the seed of Israel; but God will not tie himself to their rules.

(2.) That the Spirit should be in them a Spirit of prophecy; by the Spirit they should be enabled to foretell things to come, and to preach the gospel to every creature: This power shall be given without distinction of sex, not only your sons, but your daughters shall prophesy; without distinction of age, both your young men, and your old men shall see visions, and dream dreams, and, in them, receive divine revelations, to be communicated to the church; and, without distinction of outward condition, even the servants and handmaids shall receive of the Spirit, and shall prophesy, *ver. 18.* or, in general, men and women, whom God calls his servants, and his handmaids. In the beginning of the age of prophecy, in the Old Testament, there were schools of the prophets, and before that, the spirit of prophecy came upon the elders of Israel, that were appointed to the government; but now the Spirit shall be poured out upon persons of inferior rank, and such as were not brought up in the schools of the prophets, for the kingdom of the Messiah is to be purely spiritual. The mention of the daughters, *ver. 17.* and the handmaidens, *ver. 18.* would make one think that the women which were taken notice of, *chap. i. 14.* received the extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost, as well as the men. Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters who did prophesy, *chap. xxi. 9.* and therefore St. Paul, finding abundance of the gifts both of tongues and prophecy in the church of Corinth, saw it needful to prohibit womens use of those gifts in publick, *1 Cor. xiv. 26, 34.*

(3.) That one great thing which they should prophesy of, should be the judgments that were coming upon the Jewish nation; for this was the chief thing that Christ himself had foretold, *Matt. xxiv.* at his entrance into Jerusalem, *Luke xix. 41.* and when he was going to die, *Luke xxiii. 29.* and these judgments were to be brought upon them to punish them for their contempt of the gospel, and their opposition to it, though it came to them thus proved. They that would not submit to the power of God's grace in this wonderful effusion of his Spirit, should fall and lie under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath: They shall break, that will not bend.

1. The destruction of Jerusalem, which was about forty years after Christ's death, is here called that great and notable day of the Lord, because it put a final period to the Mosaick œconomy; the Levitical priesthood, and the ceremonial law, were thereby for ever abolished, and done away: The desolation itself was such as was never brought upon any place or nation, either before or since: It was the day of the Lord, for it was the day of his vengeance upon that people for crucifying Christ, and persecuting his ministers; it was the year of recompences for that controversy; yea, and for all the blood of the saints and martyrs, from the blood of righteous Abel, *Matt. xxiv. 35.* It was a little day of judgment; it was a notable day; in Joel it is called a terrible day, for so it was to men on earth; but here, *ἐμφανῶς* (after the seventy, shews) a glorious, illustrious

lustrious day, for so it was to Christ in heaven, it was the epiphany, his appearing, so he himself spoke of it, *Matt. xxiv. 30.* The destruction of the Jews was the deliverance of the Christians, that were *hated and persecuted* by them, and therefore that day was often spoken of by the prophets of that time, for the encouragement of suffering Christians, *that the Lord was at hand, the coming of the Lord drew nigh, the judge stood before the door, Jam. v. 8, 9.*

2. The terrible prefaces of that destruction are here foretold: *There shall be wonders in heaven above, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; and signs too in the earth beneath, blood and fire.* Josephus, in his preface to his history of the wars of the Jews, speaks of the signs and prodigies that preceded them, terrible thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes; there was a fiery comet that hung over the city for a year, and a flaming sword was seen pointing down upon it; a light shone upon the temple and the altar at midnight, as if it had been noon-day. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of these prefaces: *The blood of the Son of God, the fire of the holy Ghost* now appearing, the vapour of the smoke in which Christ ascended, *the sun darkened, and the moon made blood,* at the time of Christ's passion, were all loud warnings given to that unbelieving people to prepare for the judgments coming upon them. Or, it may be applied, and very fitly, to the previous judgments themselves, by which that desolation was brought on: *The blood* points at the wars of the Jews with the neighbour nations, with the Samaritans, Syrians, and Greeks, in which abundance of blood was shed, as there was also in their civil wars, and the struggles of the seditious, as they called them, which were very bloody; there was no peace to him that went out, or to him that came in: *The fire,* and vapour of smoke, here foretold, literally came to pass in the burning of their cities, and towns, and synagogue, and temple at last: And this turning of *the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood,* speaks the dissolution of their government, civil and sacred, and the extinguishing of all their lights.

3. The signal preservation of the Lord's people is here promised, *ver. 21. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus* (which is the description of a true Christian, *1 Cor. i. 2.*) *shall be saved,* shall escape that judgment, which shall be a type and earnest of everlasting salvation. In the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, there was a remnant sealed to be hid in *the day of the Lord's anger*; and, in the destruction by the Romans, not one Christian perished. They that distinguish themselves by singular piety, shall be distinguished by special preservation. And observe, the saved remnant are described by this, that they are a praying people; *they call on the name of the Lord*; which intimates, that they are not saved by any merit or righteousness of their own, but purely by the favour of God, which must be sued out by prayer. It is *the name of the Lord* which they call upon, that is *the strong tower.*

2. The application of this prophecy to the present event, *ver. 16. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*; it is the accomplishment of that, it is the full accomplishment of it: This is *that coming of the Spirit upon all flesh, which should come*; and we are to look for no other, no more than we are to look for another Messiah; for as our Messiah ever lives in heaven, reigning and interceding for his church on earth; so *this Spirit of grace, the Advocate, or Comforter,* that was given now, according to the promise, will, according to the same promise, continue with the church on earth to the end, and will work all its works in it, and for it, and every member of it, ordinary and extraordinary, by the means of the scriptures, and ministry.

Secondly, That it was *the gift of Christ,* and the product and proof of his resurrection and ascension. From this *gift of the holy Spirit,* he takes occasion to *preach unto them Jesus*; and this part of his sermon he introduceth with another solemn preface, *ver. 22. Men of Israel, hear these words.* It is a mercy that ye are with a hearing of them, and it is your duty to give heed to them: What concerning Christ should be acceptable words to the men of Israel. Here is,

1. An abstract of the history of the life of Christ, *ver. 22. He called him Jesus of Nazareth,* because by that name he was generally known, but, which was sufficient to roll away that reproach, he was *a man approved of God among you,* censured and condemned by men, but *approved of God*; God testified his approbation of his doctrine, by the power he gave him to *work miracles: A man raised out of God,* so Dr. Hammond reads it; signalized, and made remarkable among you, that now hear me; he was sent to you, set up a glorious light in your land; you your selves are witnesses, how he became famous by *miracles, wonders, and signs,* works above the power of nature, out of its ordinary course, and contrary to it, *which God did by him*; that is, which he did by the divine power, with which he was clothed, and in which God plainly went along with him; *for no man could do such works, unless God were with him.* See what a stress Peter lays upon Christ's miracles.

2. The matter of fact was not to be denied, for they were done in the sight of you, in the midst of your country, your city, your solemn assemblies, *as ye your selves also know*: You have been eye-witnesses of his miracles, I appeal to your selves, whether you have any thing to object against them, or can offer any thing

to disprove them. 2. The inference from them cannot be disputed; the reasoning is as strong as the evidence; if he did those miracles, certainly God approved him, *declared him to be, what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world*; for the God of truth would never set his seal to a lye.

2. An account of his death and sufferings, which they were witnesses of also, but a few weeks ago; and this was the greatest miracle of all, *that a man approved of God,* should thus seem to be abandoned of him; and a man *thus approved among the people,* and in the midst of them, should be thus abandoned by them too! But both these mysteries are here explained, *ver. 23.* and his death considered,

(1.) As God's act; and in him it was an act of wonderful grace and wisdom: He *delivered him to death*; not only permitted him to be put to death, but gave him up, devoted him; this is explained, *Rom. viii. 32. He delivered him up for us all*: And yet he was approved of God, and there was nothing in this that signified the disapproving of him; for it was done by *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,* in infinite wisdom, and for holy ends, which Christ himself concurred in, and in the means leading to them. Thus divine justice must be satisfied, sinners saved, God and man brought together again, and Christ himself glorified. It was not only according to *the will of God,* but according to *the counsel of his will,* that he suffered and died; according to *an eternal counsel,* which could not be altered: This reconciled him to the cross, *Father, thy will be done*; and, *Father, glorify thy name*; let thy purpose take effect, and let the great end of it be attained.

(2.) As the peoples act; and in them it was an act of prodigious sin and folly; it was *fighting against God,* to persecute one whom he approved as the darling of heaven; and *fighting against their own mercies,* to persecute one that was the greatest blessing of this earth: And neither God's designing it from eternity, nor his bringing good out of it to eternity, would in the least excuse their sin; for it was their voluntary act and deed, from a principle morally evil; and therefore they were *wicked hands, with which you have crucified and slain him.* It is probable, some of those were here present, who had cried, *Crucify him, Crucify him*; or had been otherwise aiding and abetting in the murder; and Peter knew it. However, it was justly looked upon as a national act, because done both by the vote of the great council, and by the voice of the great crowd. It is a rule, *Refertur ad universos quod publice fit per majorem partem.* He charges it particularly on them as parts of the nation on which it would be visited, the more effectually to bring them to *faith and repentance,* because that was the only way to distinguish themselves from the guilty, and discharge themselves from the guilt.

3. An attestation of his resurrection, which effectually wiped away the reproach of his death, *ver. 24. Whom God raised up*; the same that delivered him to death, delivered him from death, and thereby gave a higher approbation of him, than he had done by any other of the signs and wonders wrought by him, or by all put together: This therefore he insists most largely upon.

(1.) He describes his resurrection: God *loosed the bands of death,* because it was impossible that he should be holden of it; *and loosed the sorrows of death,* the word is used for *travailing pains*; and, some think, it signifies *the trouble and agony* of his soul, in which it was exceeding sorrowful, even to the death; from these pains and sorrows of soul, this travail of soul, the Father loosed him, when, at his death, he said, *It is finished.* Thus Dr. Goodwin understands it: "Those terrors which made Heman's soul lie like the slain, Psalm lxxxix. 15. these had hold of Christ; but he was too strong for them, and broke through them; this was the resurrection of his soul (and it is a great thing to bring a soul out of the depths of spiritual agonies) this was not leaving his soul in hell; as that which follows, *that he should not see corruption,* speaks of the resurrection of his body; and, both together, make up the great resurrection." Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of this: "Having dissolved the pains of death, in reference to all that believe in him, God raised up Christ, and, by his resurrection, broke all the power of death, and destroyed its pangs upon his own people: He hath abolished death, has altered the property of it, and, because it was not possible that he should be long holden of it, it is not possible that they should be for ever holden." But most refer this to the resurrection of Christ's body. And death (saith Mr. Baxter) as a separation between soul and body, is, by privation, a penal state, though not dolorous by positive evil. But Dr. Hammond shews, that the Septuagint, and, from them, the apostle here, useth the word for *cords,* and *bands,* as *Psalm xviii. 4.* to which the metaphor of loosing, and being held, best agree. Christ was imprisoned for our debt, was thrown into the bands of death, but, divine justice being satisfied, it was not possible he should be detained there, either by right, or by force; for he had life in himself, and in his own power, and had conquered the prince of death.

(2.) He attests the truth of his resurrection, *ver. 32. God hath raised him up, whereof all we are witnesses*; we apostles, and other our companions, that were intimately acquainted with him before his death, were intimately conversant with him after his resurrection, *did eat and drink with him.* They received power,

by

by the descent of the holy Ghost upon them, on purpose that they might be skilful, faithful, and courageous witnesses of this thing, notwithstanding their being charged by his enemies as having stolen him away.

(3.) He shewed it to be the fulfilling of the scripture, and, because the scripture had said that he must rise again before he saw corruption, therefore it was impossible that he should be holden by death, and the grave; for David speaks of his being raised, so it comes in, ver. 25. The scripture he refers to, is that of David, Psalm xvi. 8, 9, 10, 11. which, though in part applicable to David as a saint, yet refers chiefly to Jesus Christ, of whom David was a type. Here is,

1. The text quoted at large, ver. 25, 26, 27, 28. for it was all fulfilled in him, and shews us,

(1.) The constant regard that our Lord Jesus had to his Father in his whole undertaking; *I foresaw the Lord before me continually*: He set before him his Father's glory as his end in all; *foresaw* that his sufferings would redound abundantly to the honour of God, and would issue in his own joy; *these were set before him*, and *these he had an eye to*, in all he did and suffered; and with the prospect of these he was borne up, and carried on, John xiii. 31, 32.—xvii. 4, 5.

(2.) The assurance he had of his Father's presence and power going along with him; *He is on my right hand*, the hand of action, strengthening, guiding, and upholding that, *that I should not be moved*, or driven off from my undertaking, notwithstanding the hardships I must undergo; this was an article of the covenant of redemption, Psalm lxxxix. 21. *With him my hand shall be established, my arm also shall strengthen him*; and therefore he is confident the work shall not miscarry in his hand. If God be at our right hand, we shall not be moved.

(3.) The cheerfulness with which our Lord Jesus went on in his work, notwithstanding the sorrows he was to pass through: Being satisfied that *I shall not be moved*, but the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in my hand, *therefore doth my heart rejoice, and my tongue is glad*, and the thought of my sorrow is as nothing to me. Note, It was a constant pleasure to our Lord Jesus to look to the end of his work, and to be sure that the issue would be glorious; so well pleased was he with his undertaking, that it does his heart good to think how the issue would answer the design! *He rejoiced in spirit*, Luke x. 21. *My tongue was glad*. In the psalm it is, *My glory rejoiceth*; which intimates, that our tongue is our glory, the faculty of speaking is an honour to us, and never more so, than when it is employed in praising God. Christ's tongue was glad, for when he was just entering upon his sufferings, in the close of his last supper, he sang an hymn.

(4.) The pleasing prospect he had of the happy issue of his death and sufferings; this was it that carried him, not only with courage, but with cheerfulness through them; he was putting off the body, but *my flesh shall rest*; the grave shall be to the body, while it lies there, a bed of repose, and hope shall give it a sweet repose; *it shall rest in hope, on, that thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*; what follows is the matter of his hope, or assurance rather:

1. That the soul shall not continue in a state of separation from the body; for, besides that that is some uneasiness to a human soul made for its body, it would be the continuance of death's triumph over him, who was in truth a conqueror over death. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, in *hades*, in the invisible state, so *hades* properly signifies; but though thou suffer it for a time to remove thither, and to remain there, yet thou wilt remand it; *thou wilt not leave it there*, as thou dost the souls of other men.

2. That the body shall lie but a little while in the grave; *Thou wilt not suffer thy holy One to see corruption*; the body shall not continue dead so long, as that it should begin to putrefy, or become noisom; and therefore it must return to life, on, or before, the third day after its death. Christ was God's holy One, sanctified, and set apart to his service, in the work of redemption; he must die, for he must be consecrated by his own blood; but he must not see corruption, for his death was to be unto God of a sweet smelling savour: And this was typified by the law concerning the sacrifices, that no part of the flesh of the sacrifices which was to be eaten, should be kept till the third day, for fear it should see corruption, and begin to putrefy, Lev. vii. 15,—18.

3. That his death and sufferings should be, not to him only, but to all his, an inlet to a blessed immortality: *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life*, and, by me, made them known to the world, and laid them open. When the Father gave to the Son to have life in himself, a power to lay down his life, and to take it again, then he shewed him the ways of life, both to and fro: The gates of death were opened to him, and the doors of the shadow of death (Job xxxviii. 17.) to pass and repass through them, as his occasions led him for man's redemption.

4. That all his sorrows and sufferings should end in perfect and perpetual felicity: *Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance*. The reward set before him was joy, a fulness of joy, and that in God's countenance, in the countenance he gave to his undertaking, and to all those, for his sake, that should believe in him. The smiles with which the Father received him, when, at his ascension, he was brought to the Ancient of days, filled him with

joy unspeakable: And that is the joy of our Lord, into which all his shall enter, and in which they shall be for ever happy,

2. The comment upon this text, especially so much of it as relates to the resurrection of Christ: He addresses himself to them with a title of respect, *Men and brethren*, ver. 29. You are men, and therefore should be ruled with reason; you are brethren, and therefore should take kindly what is said to you by one, that, being nearly related to you, is heartily concerned for you, and witheth you well: Now, give me leave, *freely to speak to you concerning the patriarch David*, and let it be no offence to you; if I tell you, that David cannot be understood here as speaking of himself, but of the Christ to come: David is here called a patriarch, because he was the father of the royal family, and a man of great note and eminency in his generation, and whose name and memory was justly very precious. Now when we read that psalm of his, we must consider,

1. That he could not say that of himself, for he died, and was buried, and his sepulchre remained in Jerusalem till now, when Peter spoke this, and his bones and ashes in it; no body ever pretended that he had risen, and therefore he could never say of himself, that he should not see corruption; for it was plain he did see corruption. St. Paul urgeth this, Acts xiii. 35, 36, 37. Though he was a man after God's own heart, yet he went the way of all the earth, as he saith himself, 1 Kings ii. 2. both in death and burial.

2. Therefore certainly he spoke it as a prophet, with an eye to the Messiah, whose sufferings the prophets testified beforehand, and with them the glory that should follow; so did David in that psalm, as Peter here plainly shews.

(1.) David knew that the Messiah should descend from his loins, ver. 30. That God had sworn to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He promised him a son, the throne of whose kingdom should be established for ever, 2 Sam. vii. 12. And it is said, Psalm cxxxii. 11. God swore it in truth unto David. When our Lord Jesus was born, it was promised that the Lord God would give him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. And all Israel knew that the Messiah was to be the son of David, that is, that, according to the flesh, he should be so, by his human nature; for otherwise, according to the spirit, and by his divine nature, he was to be David's Lord, not his son. God having sworn to David, that the Messiah, promised to his fathers, should be his son and successor, the fruit of his loins, and heir to his throne, he kept this in view in penning his psalms.

(2.) Christ being the fruit of his loins, and, consequently, in his loins, when he penned that psalm (as Levi is said to be in Abraham's loins, when he paid tythes to Melchizedek) if what he saith, as in his own person, be not applicable to himself, as it is plain that it is not, we must conclude it points to that son of his that was then in his loins, in whom his family and kingdom were to have their perfection and perpetuity; and therefore, when he saith that his soul should not be left in its separate state, nor his flesh see corruption, without doubt, he must be understood to speak of the resurrection of Christ, ver. 31. And as Christ died, so he rose again according to the scriptures; and that he did so, we are witnesses.

3. Here is a touch upon his ascension too: As David did not rise from the dead, so neither did he ascend into the heavens bodily as Christ did, ver. 34. And further, to prove that when he spoke of the resurrection he meant it of Christ, he observes that, when in another psalm he speaks of the next step of his exaltation, he plainly shews that he spoke of another person, and such another as was his Lord, Psalm cx. 1. The Lord said unto my Lord, when he had raised him from the dead, Sit thou at my right hand, in the highest dignity and dominion there; be thou intrusted with the administration of the kingdom, both of providence and grace; sit there as king until I make thy foes either thy friends or thy footstool, ver. 35. Christ rose from the grave to rise higher, and therefore it must be of his resurrection that David spoke, and not his own, in the xvth Psalm, for there was no occasion for him to rise out of his grave, who was not to ascend to heaven.

We now come to the application of this discourse concerning the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

1. This explains the meaning of the present wonderful effusion of the Spirit in those extraordinary gifts. Some of the people had asked, ver. 12. What meaneth this? I will tell you the meaning of it, saith Peter: This Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God, so some read it, to sit there; exalted by the right hand of God, so we read it, by his power and authority, it comes all to one; and having received of the Father, to whom he is ascended, the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath given what he received (Psalm lxviii. 18.) and hath shed forth this which you now see and hear; for the holy Ghost was to be given when Jesus was glorified, and not before, John vii. 39. You see and hear us speak with tongues that we never learned; probably, there was an observable change in the air of their countenances, which they saw, as well as heard the change of their voice and language; now this is from the holy Ghost, whose coming is an evidence that Jesus is exalted, and he has received this gift from the Father, to confer it upon the church, which plainly speaks him to be the mediator, or middle person be-

tween God and the church. *The gift of the holy Ghost* was, 1. A performance of divine promises already made, here it is called *the promise of the holy Ghost*; many exceeding great and precious promises the divine power has given us, but this is *the promise*; by way of eminency, as that of the Messiah had been, and this is *the promise* that includes all the rest; hence God's giving *the holy Spirit to them that ask him*, Luke xi. 13. is his giving them all good things, Matt. vii. 11. Christ received *the promise of the holy Ghost*, i. e. *the promised gift of the holy Ghost*, and has given it to us; for all the promises are yea and amen in him. 2. It was a pledge of all divine favours further intended; what you now see and hear, is but an earnest of greater things.

2. This proves, what you are all bound to believe, *that Christ Jesus is the true Messiah, and Saviour of the world*; this he closeth his sermon with, as *the conclusion of the whole matter*, the *quod erat demonstrandum*, ver. 36. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly*, that this truth has now received its full confirmation, and we our full commission to publish it, *That God has made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*. They were charged to tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ, till after his resurrection, Matt. xvi. 20.—xvii. 9. but now it must be proclaimed on the house-tops, to all the house of Israel; he that has ears to hear, let him hear it; it is not proposed as probable, but depose as certain, let them know it assuredly, and know that it is their duty to receive it as a faithful saying, 1. That God has glorified him, whom they have crucified. This aggravates their wickedness, that they crucified one, whom God designed to glorify; and put him to death as a deceiver, who had given such pregnant proofs of his divine mission: And it magnifies the wisdom and power of God, that though they crucified him, and thought thereby to have put him under an indelible mark of infamy, yet God had glorified him, and the indignities they had done him, served as a foil to his lustre. 2. That he has glorified him to that degree, as to make him both Lord and Christ: These signify the same; he is Lord of all, and he is not a usurper; but is Christ anointed to be so? He is one Lord to the Gentiles, who had had lords many; and to the Jews he is Messiah, which includes all his offices. He is the King Messiah, as the Chaldee paraphrast calls him; or, as the angel to Daniel, Messiah the prince, Dan. ix. 25. This is the great truth of the gospel which we are to believe, that that same Jesus, the very same that was crucified at Jerusalem, is he to whom we owe allegiance, and from whom we are to expect protection as Lord and Christ.

37. ¶ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost. 39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41. ¶ Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

We have seen the wonderful effect of *the pouring out of the Spirit*, in its influence upon the preachers of the gospel: Peter, in all his life, never spoke at that rate that he had done now, with such fulness, perspicuity and power; we are now to see another blessed fruit of *the pouring out of the Spirit*, in its influence upon the hearers of the gospel; from the first delivery of that divine message, it appeared that there was a divine power going along with it, and it was mighty, through God, to do wonders; thousands were immediately brought by it to the obedience of faith; it was the rod of God's strength sent out of Zion, Psalm cx. 2, 3. We have here the first-fruits of that vast harvest of souls, which, by it, were gathered in to Jesus Christ. Come and see, in these verses, *the exalted Redeemer riding forth*, in these chariots of salvation, conquering, and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2.

In these verses, we find the word of God, the means of beginning and carrying on a good work of grace in the hearts of many, *the Spirit of the Lord working by it*: Let us see the method of it.

First, They were startled and convinced, and put upon a serious enquiry, ver. 37. When they heard, or, having heard, having patiently heard Peter out, and not given him the interruption they had been used to give to Christ in his discourses (this was one good point gained, that they were become attentive to the word) they were pricked to the heart, or, in the heart, and, under a deep concern and perplexity, applied themselves to the preacher with this question, *What shall we do?* It was very strange, that such impression should be made upon such hard hearts all of a sudden! They were Jews, bred up in the opinion of the sufficiency of their religion to save them, had lately seen this Jesus crucified in weakness and disgrace, and were told by their rulers that he was a de-

ceiver; Peter had charged them with having a hand, a wicked hand in his death, which was likely to have exasperated them against him, yet when they heard this plain scriptural sermon they were much affected with it.

1. It put them in pain; they were pricked in their hearts. We read of those that were cut to the heart with indignation at the preacher, Acts vii. 54. but these were pricked to the heart with indignation at themselves for having been accessory to the death of Christ. Peter charging it upon them awakened their consciences, touched them to the quick, and the reflexion they now made upon it was as a sword in their bones, it pierced them as they had pierced Christ. Note, Sinners when their eyes are opened cannot but be pricked to the heart for sin, cannot but experience an inward uneasiness; this is having the heart rent, Joel ii. 13. a broken and contrite heart, Psalm li. 17. Those that are truly sorry for their sins, and ashamed of them, and afraid of the consequences of them are pricked to the heart. A prick in the heart is mortal, and under those commotions (saith Paul) I died, Rom. vii. 9. All my good opinion of my self, and confidence in my self failed me.

2. It put them upon enquiry. Out of the abundance of the heart, thus pricked, the mouth spoke. Observe,

1. To whom thus they addressed themselves; to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, some to one and some to another, to them they opened their case; by them they had been convinced, and therefore by them they expect to be counselled and comforted. They do not appeal from them to the Scribes and Pharisees to justify them against the apostles charge, but apply to them, as owning the charge, and referring the case to them. They call them men and brethren, as Peter had called them, ver. 29. it is a style of friendship and love, rather than a title of honour, you are men, look upon us with humanity, you are brethren, look upon us with brotherly love. Note, Ministers are spiritual physicians, they should be advised with by those whose consciences are wounded; and it is good for people to be free and familiar with those ministers, as men, and their brethren, who deal for their souls as for their own.

2. What the address is: *What shall we do?*

1. They speak as men at a plunge, that did not know what to do; in a perfect surprize; *Is that Jesus*, whom we have crucified, both Lord and Christ! Then what will become of us, who crucified him? We are all undone! Note, No way of being happy, but by seeing ourselves miserable. When we find ourselves in danger of being lost for ever, there is hopes of our being made for ever, and not till then.

2. They speak as men at a point, that were resolved to do any thing they shall be directed to presently; they are not for taking time to consider, or adjourning the prosecution of their convictions to a more convenient season, but desire now to be told what they must do to escape the misery they were liable to. Note, Those that are convinced of sin, would gladly know the way to peace and pardon, Acts ix. 6.—xvi. 30.

Secondly, Peter and the apostles direct them in short what they must do, and what in so doing they might expect, ver. 38, 39. Sinners convinced, must be encouraged; and that which is broken must be bound up, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. they must be told, that though their case is sad, it is not desperate, there is hope for them.

(1.) He here shews them the course they must take:

1. Repent, that is a plank after shipwreck: Let the sense of this horrid guilt which you have brought upon your selves by putting Christ to death, awaken you to a penitent reflexion upon all your other sins, as the demand of some one great debt brings to light all the debts of a poor bankrupt, and to bitter remorse and sorrow for them. This was the same duty that John the baptist and Christ had preached, and now the Spirit is poured out, it is still insisted on; *repent, repent*; change your mind, change your way; admit an after-thought.

2. Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, i. e. firmly believe the doctrine of Christ, and submit to his grace and government; and make an open, solemn profession of this, and come under an engagement to abide by it, by submitting to the ordinance of baptism; be profelyted to Christ and to his holy religion, and renounce your infidelity. They must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. They did believe in the Father and the holy Ghost speaking by the prophets; but they must also believe in the name of Jesus, that he is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the Fathers; take Jesus for your King, and by baptism swear allegiance to him; take him for your prophet, and hear him; take him for your priest, to make atonement for you; which seems peculiarly intended here; for they must be baptized in his name for the remission of sins upon the score of his righteousness.

(3.) This is pressed upon each particular person, every one of you; even those of you that have been the greatest sinners, if they repent and believe, are welcome to be baptized; and those that think they have been the greatest saints, yet have need to repent, and believe, and be baptized. There is grace enough in Christ for every one of you, be ye never so many, and grace suited to the case of every one. Israel of old was baptized unto Moses in the camp, the whole body of the Israelites together, when they passed through the cloud, and the sea, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2. for the covenant of peculiarity

peculiarity was national ; but now *every one of you* distinctly must be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and transact for himself in this great affair. See Col. i. 28.

(2.) He gives them encouragement to take that course :

1. It shall be for the remission of sins. Repent of your sin, and it shall not be your ruin ; be baptized into the faith of Christ, and in truth you shall be justified, which you could never be by the law of Moses. Aim at this, and depend upon Christ for it, and this you shall have. As the cup in the Lord's supper is the *New Testament* in the blood of Christ for the remission of sins, so baptism is in the name of Christ for the remission of sins. Be washed, and you shall be washed.

2. You shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost, as well as we ; for it is designed for a general blessing, some of you shall receive these external gifts, and each of you, if you be sincere in your faith and repentance, shall receive his internal graces and comforts, shall be sealed with the holy Spirit of promise. Note, All that receive the remission of sins, receive the gift of the holy Ghost : All that are justified are sanctified.

3. Your children shall still have, as they have had, an interest in the covenant, and a title to the external seal of it. Come over to Christ to receive those inestimable benefits, for the promise of the remission of sins, and the gift of the holy Ghost is to you and to your children, ver. 39. It was very express, *Isa. xlv. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed. And Isa. lix. 21. My Spirit and my word shall not depart from thy seed, and thy seed's seed.* When God took Abraham into covenant he said, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed, Gen. xvii. 7.* and accordingly every Israelite had his son circumcised at eight days old ; now it is proper for an Israelite, when he is by baptism to come into a new dispensation of this covenant, to ask, what must be done with my children ? Must they be thrown out, or taken in with me ? Taken in (saith Peter) by all means, for the promise, that great promise of God's being to you a God, is as much to you and to your children now as ever it was.

4. Though the promise is still extended to your children as it has been, yet it is not as it has been confined to you and them, but the benefit of it is designed for all that are afar off, we may add, and their children, for the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, *Gal. iii. 14.* The promise had long pertained to the Israelites, *Rom. ix. 4.* but now it is sent to those that are afar off, the remotest nations of the Gentiles, and every one of them too, all that are afar off. To this general the following limitation must refer, even as many of them, as many particular persons in each nation, as the Lord our God shall call effectually into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Note, God can make his call to reach those that are never so far off, and none come but whom he calls.

Thirdly, These directions are followed with a needful caution, ver. 40. with many other words to the same purpose, did he testify gospel truths, and exhort to gospel duties, now the word began to work he followed it ; he had said much in a little, ver. 38, 39. and that which one would think included all, and yet he had more to say. When we have heard those words which have done our souls good, we cannot but wish to hear more, to hear many more such words. Among other things he said (and it should seem inculcated it) *save your selves from this untoward generation.* Be ye free from them. The unbelieving Jews were an untoward generation, perverse and obstinate, they walked contrary to God and man, *1 Thes. ii. 15.* wedded to sin and marked for ruin ; now as to them,

1. Give diligence to save your selves from the ruin, that you may not be involved in that, and may escape all those things, as the Christians did, *repent, and be baptized* ; and then you shall not be sharers with them in destruction, whom you have been sharers with in sin. *O gather not my soul with sinners.*

2. In order to this, continue not with them in their sin, persist not with them in infidelity. *Save your selves*, that is, separate your selves, distinguish your selves from this untoward generation. *Be not rebellious like this rebellious house* ; partake not with them in their sins, that you share not with them in their plagues. Note, To separate ourselves from wicked people, is the only way to save ourselves from them ; though we thereby expose ourselves to their rage and enmity, we really save ourselves from them ; for if we consider whither they are hastening, we shall see it is better have the trouble of swimming against their stream, than the danger of being carried down their stream. Those that repent of their sins, and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, must evidence their sincerity, by breaking off all intimate society with wicked people. *Depart from every evil doer* ; the resolution of one that determines to keep the commandments of his God. *Psal. cxix. 115.* we must save ourselves from them, which notes avoiding them with dread and holy fear, as we would save ourselves from an enemy that seeks to destroy us, or from a house infected with the plague.

Fourthly, Here is the happy success and issue of this, ver. 41. The Spirit wrought with the word, and wrought wonders by it. These same persons that had many of them been eye-witnesses of the death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, and were not wrought upon by them, yet were wrought upon by the

preaching of the word, for that is it, that is the power of God unto salvation.

1. They received the word ; and then only the word doth us good, when we do receive it, embrace it, and bid it welcome. They admitted the conviction of it, and accepted the offers of it.

2. They gladly received it. Herod heard the word gladly, but these gladly received it, were not only glad that they had it to receive, but glad that by the grace of God they were enabled to receive it, though it would be a humbling, changing word to them, and would expose them to the enmity of their countrymen.

3. They were baptized ; believing with the heart, they made confession with the mouth, and enrolled themselves among the disciples of Christ, by that sacred rite and ceremony which he had instituted. And though Peter had said, be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, because the doctrine of Christ was the present truth, yet we have reason to think that, in baptizing them, the whole form Christ prescribed was used in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost. Note, Those that receive the Christian covenant, ought to receive the Christian baptism.

4. Hereby there were added to the disciples to the number of about three thousand souls that same day. All those that had received the holy Ghost had their tongues at work to preach, and their hands at work to baptize, for it was time to be busy, when such a harvest was to be gathered in. The conversion of these three thousand, with these words, was a greater work than the feeding of four or five thousand with a few loaves. Now Israel began to multiply after the death of our Joseph. They are said to be three thousand souls, which word is generally used for persons when women and children are included with men, as *Gen. xlv. 21. Give me the souls, Gen. xvi. 27.* seventy souls, which intimates that those that were here baptized, were not so many men, but so many heads of families, as, with their children and servants baptized, might make up three thousand souls. These were added to them. Note, They who are joined to Christ are added to the disciples of Christ, and join with them : When we take God for our God, we must take his people to be our people.

42. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43. And fear came upon every soul : and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common, 45. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47. Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

We often speak of the primitive church, and appeal to it, and to the history of it ; in these verses we have the history of the truly primitive church, of the first days of it, its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest innocence.

First, They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion, for Christianity, admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him, and promised to meet us.

1. They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the preaching of the word. They continued in the apostles doctrine, and never disowned or deserted it, or, as it may be read, they continued constant to the apostles teaching, or instruction, by baptism they were disciplined to be taught, and they were willing to be taught. Note, Those who have given up their names to Christ, must make conscience of hearing his word ; for thereby we give honour to him, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith.

2. They kept up the communion of saints : They continued in fellowship, ver. 42. and continued daily with one accord in the temple, ver. 46. They not only had a mutual affection to each other, but a great deal of mutual conversation with each other ; they were much together. When they withdrew from the untoward generation, they did not turn hermits, but were very intimate with one another, and took all occasions to meet ; wherever you saw one disciple, you should see more, like birds of a feather : See how these Christians love one another. They were concerned for one another, sympathized with one another, and heartily espoused one another's interests. They had till with one another in religious worship ; they met in the temple ; there was their rendezvous ; for joint-fellowship with God is the best fellowship we can have with one another, *1 John. 3.* O serve, 1. They were daily in the temple, not only on the days of the sabbath, and solemn feasts, but on other days, every day. Worshipping God

is to be our daily work, and, where there is opportunity, the oftner it is done publickly the better. God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we. 2. They were *with one accord*; not only no discord or strife, but a great deal of holy love among them; and they heartily joined in their publick services. Though they met with the Jews in the courts of the temple, yet the Christians kept together by themselves, and were unanimous in their separate devotions.

3. They frequently joined in the ordinance of the Lord's-supper; they continued in *breaking of bread*, in celebrating that memorial of their Master's death, as those that were not ashamed to own their relation to and their dependence upon Christ and him crucified. They could not forget the death of Christ, yet they kept up this memorial of it, and made it their constant practice, because it was an institution of Christ's to be transmitted to the succeeding ages of the church. They broke bread *from house to house*; κατ' οἶκον, *house by house*, they did not think fit to celebrate the eucharist in the temple, for that was peculiar to the Christian institutes, and therefore they administered that ordinance in private houses, choosing such houses of the converted Christians as were convenient, to which the neighbours resorted; and they went from one to another of these little synagogues or domestick chapels, houses that had churches in them, and there celebrated the eucharist, with those that usually met there to worship God.

4. They continued in *prayers*. After the Spirit was poured out, as well as before while they were waiting for him, they continued instant in prayer; for prayer will never be superseded till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. *Breaking of bread*, comes in between the *word* and *prayer*, for it has reference to both, and is a help to both. The Lord's-supper is a sermon to the eye, and a confirmation of God's word to us; and it is an encouragement to our prayers, and a solemn expression of the ascent of our souls to God.

5. They abounded in *thanksgiving*; were continually praising God, ver. 27. That should have a part in every prayer, and not be crowded into a corner. They that have received the gift of the holy Ghost, will be much in praise.

Secondly, They were loving one to another, and very kind; their charity was as eminent as their piety, and their joining together in holy ordinances knit their hearts to each other, and very much endeared them to one another.

1. They had frequent meetings for Christian converse, ver. 44. *All that believed were together*; not all those thousands in one place: That was impracticable; but, as Dr. Lightfoot explains it, they kept together in several companies, or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other references brought them, and kept them together. And this joining together, because it was a-part from those that believed not, and because it was in the same profession and practice of the duties of religion, they are said to be together, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ. They associated together, and so both expressed and increased their mutual love.

2. They had *all things common*; perhaps, they had common tables, as the Spartans of old, for familiarity, temperance, and freedom of conversation; they *eat together*, that they who had much might have the less, and so be kept from the temptations of abundance; and they who had little might have the more, and so be kept from the temptations of want and poverty. Or, there was such a concern for one another, and such a readiness to help one another as there was occasion, that it might be said, they had *all things common*, according to the law of friendship; one wanted not what another had; for he might have it for the asking.

3. They were very cheerful, and very generous in the use of what they had. Besides the religion that was in their sacred feasts, their *breaking bread from house to house*, a great deal of it appeared in their common meals; they did *eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*. They brought the comforts of God's table along with them to *their own*, which had two good effects upon them:

1. It made them very pleasant, and enlarged their hearts in holy joy; they did eat their bread with joy, and *drank their wine with a merry heart*, as knowing that God now accepted their works. None have such cause to be cheerful as good Christians have; it is pity but that they should always have hearts to be so. 2. It made them very liberal to their poor brethren, and enlarged their hearts in charity. They did *eat their meat with singleness of heart*, ἐν ἀμεσότητι καρδίας, with liberality of heart; (so some) they did not eat their morsels alone, but bid the poor welcome to their tables, not grudgingly, but with all the hearty freedom imaginable. Note, It becomes Christians to be open-hearted, and open-handed, and in every good work to sow plentifully, as those on whom God hath sowed plentifully, and that hope to reap so.

4. They raised a fund for charity, ver. 45. They *sold their possessions and goods*, some sold their lands and houses, others their stocks, and the furniture of their houses, and parted the money to their brethren, as every man had need. This was not to destroy property (as Mr. Baxter saith) but selfishness. Herein probably there was an eye to the command which Christ gave to the rich man, as a test of his sincerity, *sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*. Not that this was intended for an example to be a constant binding rule, as all Christians, in all places and ages, were bound

to sell their estates, and give away the money in charity: For St. Paul's, epistles after this, often speak of the distinction of rich and poor, and Christ hath said, that *the poor we have always with us*, and shall have, and the rich must be always doing them good out of the rents, issues and profits of their estates, which they disable themselves to do, if they sell them and give all away at once. But here the case was extraordinary. 1. They were under no obligation of a divine command to do this, as appears by what Peter said to Ananias, chap. v. 4. *Was it not in thine own power?* But it was a very commendable instance of their raisedness above the world, their contempt of it, their assurance of another world, their love to their brethren, their compassion to the poor, and their great zeal for the encouraging of Christianity, and the nursing of it in its infancy. The apostles left all to follow Christ, and were to give themselves wholly to the word and prayer, and something must be done for their maintenance; so that this extraordinary liberality, was like that of Israel in the wilderness towards the building of the tabernacle, which needed to be restrained, *Exod. xxxvii. 5, 6*. Our rule is, to give according as God hath blessed us; yet in such an extraordinary case as this, those are to be praised who give *beyond their power*, 2 Cor. viii. 3. 2. They were Jews that did this, and they who believed Christ, must believe that the Jewish nation should shortly be destroyed, and an end put to the possession of estates and goods in it, and in the belief of that they sold them for the present service of Christ and his church.

Thirdly, God owned them, and gave them signal tokens of his presence with them, ver. 43. *many wonders and signs were done by the apostles* of divers sorts, which confirmed their doctrine, and uncontestably proved that it was from God. They that could work miracles, could have maintained themselves and the poor that were among them miraculously, as Christ fed thousands with a little food; but it was as much for the glory of God that it should be done by a miracle of grace, inclining people to sell their estates to do it, as if it had been done by a miracle in nature.

But the Lord's giving them power to work miracles was not all he did for them, he *added to the church daily*. The word in their mouths *did wonders*, and God blessed their endeavours for the increase of the number of believers. Note, It is God's work to add souls to the church; and it is a great comfort both to ministers and Christians to see it.

Fourthly, The people were influenced by it; they that were without, the standers by, that were spectators.

1. They *feared them*, and had a veneration for them, ver. 43. *fear came upon every soul*, i. e. upon very many, who saw the *wonders and signs* done by the apostles, and were afraid, lest their not being respected as they should be, would bring desolation upon their nation. The common people stood in awe of them, as Herod feared John: Though they had nothing of external pomp, to command external respect, as the scribes long robes gained them the *greetings in the market-places*, yet they had abundance spiritual in them that was truly honourable, which possessed men with an inward reverence for them. Fear came upon every soul; the souls of people were strangely influenced by their awful preaching and living.

2. They *favoured them*; Though we have reason to think, there were those that despised them and hated them (we are sure the Pharisees and chief priests did) yet far the greater part of the common people had a kindness for them, they *had favour with all the people*. Christ was so violently run upon, and run down by a *packed mobb*, which cried, *crucify him, crucify him*; that one would think his doctrine and followers were never likely to have an interest in the common people any more. And yet here we find them *in favour with them all*; by which it appears that their prosecuting Christ, was a sort of a force put upon them by the artifices of the priests; now they returned to their wits, to their right mind. Note, Undissembled piety and charity, will command respect; and cheerfulness in serving God, will recommend religion to those that are without. Some read it, *They had charity to all the people*; χαρίεν ἔχοντες πρὸς ὅλον πᾶν λαόν, they did not confine their charity to those of their own community, but it was *catholic* and *extensive*; and this recommended them very much.

3. They *fell over to them*; Some or other were daily coming in, though not so many as the first day; and they were such as *should be saved*. Note, Those that God has designed for eternal salvation, shall one time or other be effectually brought to Christ; and those that are brought to Christ, are *added to the church* in a holy covenant by baptism, and in holy communion by other ordinances.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have a miracle and a sermon: The miracle wrought to make way for the sermon, and to confirm the doctrine that was to be preached, and to make way for it into the minds of people; and then the sermon to explain the miracle, and to sow the ground which by it was broken up. (1.) The miracle was the healing of a man that was lame from his birth, with a word speaking, ver. 1,—8. And the impression which this made upon the people, ver. 9,—11. (2.) The scope of the sermon which was preached hereupon

hereupon, was to bring people to Christ, to repent of their sin in crucifying him, ver. 12,—19. And to believe in him now he was glorified, and to comply with the Father's design in glorifying him, ver. 20,—26. The former part of the discourse opens the wound, the latter applies the remedy.

1. **N**OW Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. 2. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple. 3. Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. 4. And Peter fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. 5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. 7. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. 8. And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 10. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11. And as the lame man which was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomons, greatly wondering.

We were told in general, chap. ii. 43. That many signs and wonders were done by the apostles, which are not written in this book; but here we have one given us for an instance. As they wrought miracles not upon every body, as every body had occasion for them, but as the holy Spirit gave direction, so as to answer the end of their commission; so all the miracles they did work, are not written in this book; but such only are recorded as the holy Ghost thought fit to answer the end of this sacred history.

First, The persons by whose ministry this miracle was wrought were Peter and John, two principal men among the apostles; they were so in Christ's time, one speaker of the house for the most part, the other favourite of the Master; and they continue so; when, upon the conversion of thousands, the church was divided into several societies, perhaps Peter and John presided in that which Luke associated with, and therefore he is more particular in recording what they said and did, as afterwards what Paul said and did, when he attended him: Both the one and the other being designed for a specimen of what the other apostles did.

Peter and John had each of them a brother among the twelve, with which they were coupled when they were sent out; yet now they seem to be knit together more closely than either of them to his brother; for the bond of friendship is sometimes stronger than that of relation; there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Peter and John seem to have had a peculiar intimacy after Christ's resurrection more than before, John xx. 2. The reason of which, (if I may have liberty to conjecture) might be this; that John, a disciple made up of love, was more compassionate to Peter upon his fall and repentance, and more tender of him in his bitter weeping for his sin, than any other of the apostles were, and more solicitous to restore him with the spirit of meekness; which made him very dear to Peter ever after: And it was a good evidence of Peter's acceptance with God upon his repentance, that Christ's favourite was made his bosom friend: David prayed after his fall, Let them that fear thee turn unto me, Psal. cxix. 79.

Secondly, The time and place are here set down:

1. It was in the temple, whither Peter and John went up together; because it was the place of concourse, there were the shoals of fish, among whom the net of the gospel was to be cast, especially during the days of the pentecost, within the compass of which we may suppose this to have happened. Note, It is good to go up to the temple, to attend on publick ordinances; and it is comfortable to go up together to the temple, I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go.—The best society is society in worshipping of God.

2. It was at the hour of prayer, one of the hours of publick worship, commonly appointed and observed among the Jews; time and place are two necessary circumstances of every action, which must be determined by consent, as is most convenient for edification with reference to publick worship; there must be a house of prayer, and an hour of prayer; the ninth hour; that is three a clock in the afternoon was one of the hours of prayer among the Jews: Nine in the morning, and twelve at noon, were the other two. See Psal. lv. 17. Dan. vi. 10. It is of use for private Christians so far to have their hours of prayer as may serve, though not to bind, yet to mind conscience; every thing is beautiful in its season.

No. 99.

Thirdly, The patient is here described, on whom this miraculous cure was wrought, ver. 2. He was a poor lame beggar, at the temple-gate.

1. He was a cripple, not by accident so, but born so; he was lame from his mother's womb, as it should seem, by a paralytick distemper, which weakened his limbs; for it is said in the description of his cure, ver. 7. That his feet and ankle-bones received strength. Some such piteous cases now and then there are, which we ought to be affected with, and look upon with compassion, and which are designed to shew us what we all are by nature spiritually; without strength, lame from our birth, unable to work or walk in God's service.

2. He was a beggar; being unable to work for his living, he must live upon alms; such are God's poor: He was laid daily by his friends at one of the gates of the temple, a miserable spectacle, unable to do any thing else for himself but to ask alms of them that entered into the temple, or came out. There was a concourse, and a concourse of devout good people, from whom charity might be expected, and a concourse of such people when it might be hoped they were in the best frame, and there he was laid. Those that need and cannot work, must not be ashamed to beg. And he would not have been laid there, and laid daily there if he had not been used to meet with supplies, daily supplies there. Note, Our prayers and our alms should go together; Cornelius's did, Acts x.

4. Objects of charity should be in a particular manner welcome to us when we go up to the temple to pray; it is pity that common beggars at church-doors should any of them be of such a character as to discourage charity; but they ought not always to be over-looked, some there are surely that merit regard; and better feed ten drones, yea, and some wasps, than let one bee starve. The gate of the temple at which he was laid, is here named, it was called beautiful, for the extraordinary splendour and magnificence of it. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that this was the gate that led out of the court of the Gentiles into that of the Jews, and supposes that the cripple would beg only of the Jews, as disdaining to ask any thing of the Gentiles. But Dr. Whitby takes it to be at the first entrance into the temple, and beautified so sumptuously as became the frontispiece of that place where the divine Majesty vouchsafed to dwell; and it was no diminution to the beauty of this gate, that a poor man lay there begging.

3. He begged of Peter and John, ver. 3. begged an alms, that was the utmost he expected from them, who had the reputation of being charitable men, and who, though they had not much, yet did good with what they had. It was not many weeks ago that the blind and the lame came to Christ in the temple, and were healed there, Mat. xxi. 14. And why might not he have asked more than an alms, if he knew that Peter and John were Christ's messengers, and preached and wrought miracles in his name. But he had that done for him which he looked not for; asked an alms, and had a cure.

Fourthly, We have here the method of the cure:

1. His expectations were raised. Peter, instead of turning his eyes from him, as many do from objects of charity, turned his eyes to him, nay, he fastened his eyes upon him, that his eye might affect his heart with compassion towards him, ver. 4. John did so too, for they were both guided by one and the same Spirit, and concurred in this miracle, they said, Look on us. Our eye must be ever towards the Lord, the eye of our mind, and in token of that the eye of the body may properly be fixed on those whom he employs as the ministers of his grace. This man needed not be bidden twice to look on the apostles; for he justly thought this gave him cause to expect that he should receive something from them, and therefore he gave heed to them, ver. 5. Note, We must come to God both to attend on his word, and to apply ourselves to him in prayer, with hearts fixed, and expectations raised. Look up to heaven, and expect to receive benefit by that which God speaks from thence, and an answer of peace to the prayers sent up thither. I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

2. His expectations of an alms were balked; Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, and therefore none to give thee; yet, he intimates that if he had any, he would give him an alms, not brass, but silver or gold. Note, It is not often that Christ's friends and favourites have abundance of the wealth of this world. The apostles were very poor, had but just enough for themselves, and no overplus; Peter and John had abundance of money laid at their feet, but that was appropriated to the maintenance of the poor of the church, and they would not convert any of it to their own use, nor dispose of it otherwise than according to the intention of the donors. Publick trusts ought to be strictly and faithfully observed. 2. Many that are well inclined to works of charity, yet are not in a capacity of doing any thing considerable, while others that have wherewithal to do much, have not a heart to do any thing.

3. His expectations, notwithstanding, were quite out-done; Peter had no money to give him; but, 1. He had that which was better, such an interest in heaven, such a power from heaven, as to be able to cure his disease. Note, Those who are poor in the world, may yet be rich, very rich in spiritual gifts, graces, and comforts; certainly, there is that we are capable of which is infinitely better than silver and gold; the merchandize and gain of it

better,

better, *Job xxviii, 12, &c. Prov. iii. 14, &c. 2.* He gave him that which was better, the cure of his disease, which he would gladly have given a great deal of silver and gold for, if he had had it, and it could have been so obtained. This would enable him to work for his living, so that he should not need to beg any more; nay, he should *have to give to them that needed, and it is more blessed to give than to receive.* A miraculous cure would be a greater instance of God's favour, and would put a greater honour upon him, than thousands of gold and silver could. Observe, When Peter had no silver and gold to give, yet, (saith he) *such as I have give I thee.* Note, Those may and ought to be otherwise charitable and helpful to the poor, that have not wherewithal to give in charity; they that have not silver and gold, have their limbs and senses, and with these may be serviceable to the blind, and lame, and sick, which if they be not as there is occasion, neither would they give to them if they had silver and gold. *As every one has received the gift, so let him minister it.*

Let us now see how the cure was wrought:

1. Christ sent his word and healed him, *Psa. cvii. 20.* for healing grace is given by the word of Christ; that is the vehicle of the healing virtue derived from Christ. Christ spoke cures by himself, the apostles spoke them in his name. Peter bids a lame man rise up and walk; which would have been a banter upon him, if he had not premised in the name of Jesus of Nazareth; I say it by warrant from him, and it shall be done by power from him, and all the glory and praise of it shall be ascribed to him. He calls Christ Jesus of Nazareth, which was a name of reproach, to intimate, that the indignities done him on earth, served but as a foil to his glories now he was in heaven. Give him what name you will, call him if you will in scorn Jesus of Nazareth, in that name you shall see wonders done; for because he humbled himself, thus highly was he exalted. He bids the cripple rise up and walk; which doth not prove that he had power in himself to do it, but proves, if he attempt to rise and walk, and in a sense of his own impotency, depend upon a divine power to enable him to do it, he shall be enabled; and by rising and walking, he must evidence that power has wrought upon him; and then let him take the comfort, and let God have the praise. Thus it is in the healing of our souls, that are spiritually impotent.

2. Peter lent his hand and helped him, ver. 7. He took him by the right hand in the same name in which he had spoken to him to arise and walk, and lift him up. Not that this could contribute any thing to his cure, it was but a sign, plainly intimating the help he should receive from God if he exerted himself, as he was bidden. When God by his word commands us to rise, and walk in the way of his commandments; if we mix faith with that word, and lay our souls under the power of it, he will give his Spirit to take us by the hand, and lift us up. If we set ourselves to do what we can, God has promised his grace to enable us to do what we cannot: And by that promise we partake of a new nature; and that grace shall not be in vain; it was not here; his feet and ankle-bones received strength; which they had not done, if he had not attempted to rise, and been helped up; he doth his part, and Peter doth his, and yet it is Christ that doth all: it is he that puts strength into him. As the bread multiplied in the breaking, and the water was turned into wine in the pouring out, so strength was given to the cripple's feet in his stirring them, and using them.

Fifthly, Here is the impression which this cure made upon the patient himself, which we may best conceive of, if we put our soul into his soul's stead.

1. He leaped up, in obedience to the command, arise, he found in himself such a degree of strength in his feet and ankle-bones, that he did not steal up fair and softly, with fear and trembling, as weak people do when they begin to recover strength; but he started up as one refreshed with sleep, boldly, and with great agility, and as one that questioned not his own strength. The incomes of strength were sudden, and he no less sudden in shewing them. He leaped, as one glad to quit the bed or pad of straw on which he had lain so long lame.

2. He stood and walked; he stood, without either leaning or trembling, stood straight up, and walked without a staff, he trod strongly, and moved steadily; and this was to manifest the cure, and that it was a thorough cure. Note, Those who have had experience of the working of divine grace upon them, should evidence what they have experienced. Has God put strength into us? let us stand before him in the exercises of devotion, let us walk before him, in all the instances of a religious conversation. Let us stand up resolutely for him, and walk cheerfully with him, and both in strength, derived and received from him.

3. He held Peter and John, ver. 11. We need not ask, why he held them; I believe he scarce knew himself; but it was in a transport of joy that he embraced them as the best benefactors he ever met with, and hung upon them to a degree of rudeness; he would not let them go forward, but would have them stay with him, while he published to all about him what God had done for him by them. Thus he testified his affection to them, he held them, and would not let them go. Some suggest, that he clung to them for fear lest if they should leave him, his lameness should return. Those whom God hath healed, love them whom he made instruments of their healing, and see the need of their further help.

4. He entered with them into the temple. His strong affection to them held them; but it should not hold them so fast as to keep them out of the temple whither they were going to preach Christ. We should never suffer ourselves to be diverted by the most affectionate kindnesses of our friends, from going in the way of our duty. But if they will not stay with him, he is resolved to go with them; and the rather, because they are going into the temple, whence he had been so long kept by his weakness and his begging. The impotent man whom Christ cured, was presently found in the temple, John v. 14. He went into the temple, not only to offer up his praises and thanksgivings to God, but to hear more from the apostles of that Jesus in whose name he had been healed. Those that have experienced the power of Christ, should earnestly desire to grow in their acquaintance with Christ.

5. He was there walking, and leaping, and praising God. Note, The strength God has given us both in mind and body, should be made use of to his praise, and we should study how to honour him with it: Those that are healed in his name, must walk up and down in his name, and in his strength, Zech. x. 12. This man as soon as he could leap, leaped for joy in God, and praised him. Here was that scripture fulfilled, *Isa. xxxv. 6. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart.* Now this man was newly cured he was in this excess of joy and thankfulness: All true converts walk and praise God; but perhaps young converts leap more in his praises.

Sixthly, How the people that were Eye-witnesses of this miracle were influenced by it, we are next told.

1. They were intirely satisfied in the truth of the miracle, and had nothing to object against it. They knew it was he that sat begging at the Beautiful gate of the temple, ver. 10. He had sat there so long, that they all knew him; and for that reason he was chosen to be the vessel of this mercy: Now they were not so perverse as to make any doubt whether he was the same man, as the Pharisees had questioned concerning the blind man that Christ cured, John iv. 11. They now saw him walking and praising God, ver. 9. and perhaps took notice of a change in his mind: for he was now as loud in praising God, as he had used to be in begging relief. The best evidence that it was a compleat cure was, that he praised God for it. Mercies are then perfected, when they are sanctified.

2. They admired at it; they were filled with wonder and amazement, ver. 10. Greatly wonder, ver. 11. They were in an ecstasy. There seems to be this effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, that the people, at least those in Jerusalem, were more affected with the miracles the apostles wrought, than they had been with those of the same kind that had been wrought by Christ himself, and this was in order to the miracles answering their end.

3. They gathered about Peter and John; all the people ran together unto them in Solomon's porch. Some only to gratify their curiosity with the sight of men that had such power; others with a desire to hear them preach, concluding, that their doctrine must needs be of divine original, which thus had a divine ratification. They flocked to them in Solomon's porch, a part of the court of the Gentiles, where Solomon had built the outer porch of the temple. Or, it was some cloysters or piazzas which Herod had erected upon the same foundation which Solomon had built that stately porch upon, that bore his name; Herod being ambitious herein to be a second Solomon. Here the people met to see this great sight.

12. ¶ And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14. But ye denied the holy One, and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, 15. And killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him, hath given this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18. But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19. ¶ Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, 20. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21. Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began. 22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

you. 23. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

We have here the sermon which Peter preached after he had cured the lame man. *When Peter saw it.* 1. *When he saw* the people got together in a crowd, he took that opportunity to preach Christ to them, especially the temple being the place of their concourse, and Solomon's porch there, let them come and hear a more excellent wisdom than Solomon's, for behold, a greater than Solomon is here preached. 2. *When he saw* the people affected with the miracle, and filled with admiration, then he sowed the gospel seed in the ground, which was thus broken up, and prepared to receive it. 3. *When he saw* the people ready to adore him and John, he stepped in immediately, and diverted their respects from them, that they might be directed to Christ only; to this he answered presently, as Paul and Barnabas at Lystra: See chap. xiv. 14, 15. In the sermon,

First, He humbly disclaims the honour of the miracle as not due to them, who were only the ministers of Christ, or instruments in his hand for the doing of it: The doctrines they preached were not of their own invention, nor were the seals of it their own, but his whose the doctrines were. He addresseth himself to them as *men of Israel*, men, to whom pertained, not only the law and the promises, but the gospel and the performances, and who were nearly interested in the present dispensation. Two things he asks them:

1. Why they were so surprized at the miracle itself: *Why marvel ye at this?* It was indeed marvellous, and they justly wondered at it, but it was no more than what Christ had done many a time, and they had not duly regarded it, or been affected with it: It was but a little before that Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead, and why should this then seem so strange? Note, Stupid people think that strange now, which might have been familiar to them, if it had not been their own fault. Christ had lately risen from the dead himself, why did they not marvel at that? why were they not convinced by that?

2. Why they gave so much of the praise of it to them, that were only the instruments of it: *Why look ye so earnestly on us?*

1. It was certain they had made this man to walk, by which it appeared that the apostles not only were sent of God, but were sent to be blessings to the world, benefactors to mankind, and were sent to heal sick and disordered souls, that were spiritually lame and impotent; to set broken bones, and make them rejoice. 2. Yet they did not do it by any power or holiness of their own; it was not done by any might of their own, any skill they had in physick, or surgery, or any virtue in their word; the power they did it by was wholly derived from Christ; nor was it done by any merit of their own; the power which Christ gave them to do it they had not deserved, it was not by their own holiness; for as they were weak things, so they were foolish things, that Christ chose to employ; Peter was a sinful man. What holiness had Judas? yet he wrought miracles in Christ's name. What holiness any of them had, it was wrought in them, and they could not pretend to merit by it. 3. It was the peoples fault that they attributed it to their power and holiness, and accordingly looked at them. Note, The instruments of God's favour to us, though they must be respected, yet must not be idolized; we must take heed of reckoning that to be done by the instrument, which God is the author of. 4. It was the praise of Peter and John, that they would not take the honour of this miracle to themselves, but carefully transmitted it to Christ: Useful men must see to it that they be very humble: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ; not I, but the grace of God with me.

Secondly, He preacheth Christ to them, that was his business, that he might lead them into obedience to Christ.

1. He preacheth Christ, as the true Messiah promised to the fathers, ver. 13. for, 1. He is Jesus the Son of God; though they had lately condemned Christ as a blasphemer, for saying he was the Son of God, yet Peter avows it; he is his Son Jesus; to him, dear as a Son; to us, Jesus, a Saviour. 2. God hath glorified him, in raising him up to be king, priest, and prophet of his church; he glorified him in his life, and in his death, as well as in his resurrection, and ascension. 3. He has glorified him as the God of our fathers, whom he names with respect, for they were great names with the men of Israel, and justly, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; God sent him into the world, pursuant to the promises made to those patriarchs, that in their seed the families of the earth should be blessed, and the covenant made

with them, that God would be a God to them, and their seed. The apostles call the patriarchs their fathers, and God the God of those patriarchs, from whom the Jews were descended, to intimate to them, that they had no evil design upon the Jewish nation, that they should look upon them with a jealous eye, but had a value and concern for it, and were hereby well-wishers to it; and the gospel they preached, was the revelation of the mind and will of the God of Abraham: See Acts xxvi. 7, 22. Luke i. 72, 73.

2. He chargeth them flat and plain with the murder of this Jesus, as he had done before. 1. You delivered him up to your chief priests and elders, the representative body of the nation, and you of the common people were influenced by them, to clamour against him, as if he had been a publick grievance. 2. You denied him, and you disowned him, would not have him then to be your king, could not look upon him as the Messiah, because he came not in external pomp and power; you denied him in the presence of Pilate, renounced all the expectations of your church, in the presence of the Roman governor, who justly laughed at you for it; you denied him against the face of Pilate, so Dr. Hammond, in defiance of his reasonings with you: Pilate had determined to let him go, but the people opposed it, and overruled him: You were worse than Pilate, for he would have released him, if you had let him follow his own judgment: You denied the holy One, and the Just, who had approved himself so, and all the malice of his persecutors could not disprove it: The holiness and justice of the Lord Jesus, which is something more than his innocency, was a great aggravation of the sin of those that put him to death. 3. You desired a murderer to be released, and Christ crucified; as if Barabbas had deserved better at your hands, than the Lord Jesus; than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. 4. You killed the prince of life. Observe the antithesis; you preserved a murderer, a destroyer of life; and destroyed the Saviour, the author of life: You killed him, who was sent to be to you the Prince of life, and so not only forsook, but rebelled against your own mercies: You did an ungrateful thing in taking away his life, who would have been your life: You did a foolish thing to think you could conquer the Prince of life, who has life in himself, and would soon resume the life he resigned.

3. He attests his resurrection as before, chap. ii. 32. You thought the Prince of life might be deprived of his life, as any other prince might be deprived of his dignity and dominion, but you found your selves mistaken, for God raised him from the dead; so that in putting him to death, you fought against God, and were baffled. God raised him from the dead, and thereby ratified his demands, and confirmed his doctrine, and rolled away all the reproach of his sufferings; and, for the truth of his resurrection, we are all witnesses.

4. He ascribes the cure of this impotent man to the power of Christ, ver. 16. His name through faith in his name, in that discovery which he hath made of himself, has made this man strong: He repeats it again, The faith which is by him hath given him this soundness. Here, (1.) He appeals to themselves concerning the truth of the miracle; the man, on whom it was wrought, is one whom ye see, and know, and have known; he was not acquainted with Peter and John before, so that there was no room to suspect a compact between them, but you know him to be a cripple from a child: The miracle was wrought publickly, in the presence of you all; not in a corner, but in the gate of the temple; you see in what manner it was done, so as that there could be no juggle in it; you had liberty to examine it immediately, and may yet: The cure is compleat, it is a perfect soundness, you see the man walks and leaps, as one that has no remainder either of weakness or pain.

(2.) He acquaints them with the power by which it was wrought: 1. It is done by the name of Christ, not merely by naming it as a spell or charm, but it is done by us as professors and preachers of his name, by virtue of a commission and instructions we have received from him, and a power which he has invested us with; that name which Christ has above every name; his authority, his command has done it; as writs run in the king's name, though it is an inferior officer that executes them. 2. The power of Christ is fetched in, through faith in his name, a confidence in him, a dependence on him, a believing application to him, and expectation from him, even that faith which is, *ἡ ἀγάπη*, by him, which is of his working; it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of Christ; and it is for his sake, that he may have the glory of it; for he is both the author and finisher of our faith. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that faith is twice named in this verse, because of the apostles faith in doing this miracle, and the cripple's faith in receiving it; but, I suppose, it relates chiefly, if not only, to the former: They that wrought this miracle by faith, derived power from Christ to work it, and therefore returned all the glory to him. By this true and just account of the miracle, Peter both confirmed the great gospel truth they were to preach to the world, that Jesus Christ is the fountain of all power and grace, and the great healer and saviour; and recommended the great gospel duty of faith in him, as the only way of receiving benefit by him: It explains likewise the great gospel mystery of our salvation by Christ; it is his name that justifies us, that glorious name of his, the Lord our righteousness; but we, in particular, are justified by that name, through

through faith in it, applying it to ourselves. Thus doth Peter preach unto them *Jesus, and him crucified*, as a faithful friend of the bridegroom, to whose service and honour he devoted all his interest.

Thirdly, He encourageth them to hope, that though they had been guilty of putting Christ to death, yet they might find mercy; he doth all he can to convince them, yet is careful not to drive them to despair: The guilt was very great, but,

1. He mollifies their crime, by a candid imputation of it to their ignorance. Perhaps, he perceived by the countenance of his hearers, that they were struck with an exceeding horror, when he told them that they had *killed the Prince of life*, and were ready either to sink down, or to fly off, and therefore he saw it needful to mitigate the rigour of the charge, by calling them *brethren*; and well might he call them so, for he had been himself a brother with them in this iniquity; *he had denied the holy One, and the Just*, and swore he did *not know him*; he did it by surprize, and, for your parts, *I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers*, ver. 17. This was the language of Peter's charity, and teacheth us, to make the best of those whom we desire to make better. Peter had searched the wound to the bottom, and now he begins to think of healing it up, in order to which it is necessary to beget in them a good opinion of their physician; and could any thing be more winning than this? And that which bears him out in it is, that he has the example of his Master's praying for his crucifiers, and pleading in their behalf, that *they knew not what they did*. And it is said of the rulers, *that if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*: See 1 Cor. ii. 8. Perhaps, some of the rulers, and of the people, did therein rebel against the light, and the convictions of their own consciences, and did it through malice; but the generality went down the stream, and did it through ignorance; as Paul persecuted the church, *ignorantly, and in unbelief*, 1 Tim. i. 13.

2. He mollifies the effect of their crime, the death of the *Prince of life*, this sounds very dreadful, but it was according to the scriptures, ver. 18. the predictions of which, though they did not necessitate their sin, yet did necessitate his sufferings; so he himself saith, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer. You did it through ignorance*, may be taken in this sense; *you fulfilled the scripture*, and did not know it; God, by your hands, *hath fulfilled what he shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer*; that was his design in delivering him up to you, but you had views of your own, and were altogether ignorant of that design; *you meant not so, neither did your heart think so*: God was fulfilling the scripture, when you were gratifying your own passions. Observe, It was not only determined in the secret counsel of God, but declared to the world many ages before, by the mouth and pen of the prophets, that *Christ should suffer*, in order to the accomplishment of his undertaking; and it was God himself that shewed it by them, who will see that his words be made good; what he shewed, he fulfilled; he so fulfilled, so as he had shewed punctually and exactly, without any variation: Now though this is no extenuation at all of their sin in hating and persecuting Christ to the death, that still appears exceeding sinful, yet it was an encouragement to them to repent, and hope for mercy upon their repentance; not only because in general God's gracious designs were carried on by it (and thus it agrees with the encouragement *Joseph gave to his brethren*, when they thought their offence against him almost unpardonable, *Fear not, saith he, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good*, Gen. l. 15, 20.) but because in particular the death and sufferings of Christ were for the remission of sins, and the ground of that display of mercy he now encouraged them to hope for.

Fourthly, He exhorts them all to turn Christians, and assures them it would be unspeakably for their advantage to do so; it would be the making of them for ever: This is the application of his sermon:

(1.) He tells them what they must believe.

1. They must believe that Jesus Christ is the *promised seed*, that seed, in which God had told Abraham, that *all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed*, ver. 25. This refers to that promise made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. which promise was long ere it was fulfilled; but now, at length, had its accomplishment, in this *Jesus*, who was of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, and in him all the families of the earth are blessed, and not the families of Israel only; all have some benefits by him, and some have all benefits.

2. They must believe that Jesus Christ is a *prophet*, that prophet like unto Moses, which God had promised to raise up to them from among their brethren, ver. 22. This refers to that promise, Deut. xviii. 18. Christ is a prophet, for by him God speaks unto us; in him all divine revelation centers, and by him it is handed to us; he is a prophet, like unto Moses, a favourite of heaven; more intimately acquainted with the divine counsel, and more familiarly conversed with, than any other prophets: He was a deliverer of his people out of bondage, and their guide through the wilderness, like Moses; a prince, and a lawgiver, like Moses; the builder of the true tabernacle, as Moses was of the typical one: Moses was faithful as a servant, Christ as a son: Moses was murmured against by Israel, defied by Pharaoh, yet God owned him, and ratified

his commission: Moses was a pattern of meekness and patience, so is Christ: Moses died by the word of the Lord, so did Christ: *There was no prophet like unto Moses*, Numb. xii. 6, 7. Deut. xxxiv. 12. but a greater than Moses is here, where Christ is: He is a prophet of God's raising up, for he took not this honour of himself, but was called of God to it: He was raised up unto Israel in the first place; he executed this office in his own person, among them only; they had the first offer of divine grace made to them; and therefore he was raised up from among them; of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came; which, as it was a great honour done to them, so it was both an obligation upon them, and an encouragement to them to embrace him: If he come to his own, one would think, they should receive him. The Old Testament church was blessed with many prophets, with schools of prophets; for many ages with a constant succession of prophets, (which is here taken notice of, from Samuel, and those that follow after, ver. 24. for from him the prophetick Æra did commence) but those servants being abused, last of all God sent them his Son, who had been in his bosom.

3. They must believe that times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord, ver. 19. and that they will be the times of the restitution of all things, ver. 21. There is a future state, another life after this; those times will come from the presence of the Lord, from his glorious appearance at that day, his coming at the end of time. The absence of the Lord occasions many of the securities of sinners, and the distrusts of saints; but his presence is hastening on, which will for ever silence both: Behold, the judge standeth before the door. The presence of the Lord will introduce, 1. The restitution of all things, ver. 21. The new heavens, and the new earth, which will be the product of the dissolution of all things, Rom. xxi. 1. the renovation of the whole creation, which is that which it grieves after, as its present burthen under the sin of man is that which it groans under. Some understand this of a state on this side the end of time, but its rather to be understood of that end of all things, which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began; for this is that which Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of, Jude 14. and the temporal judgments, which the other prophets foretold, were typical of that which the apostle calls the eternal judgment. This is more clearly and plainly revealed in the New Testament than it had been before, and all that receive the gospel have an expectation of it. 2. With this will come the times of refreshing, ver. 19. of consolation to the Lord's people, like a cool shade to those that have borne the burthen and heat of the day. All Christians look for a rest that remains for the people of God, after the travels and toils of their present state, and, with the prospect of that, they are borne up under their present sufferings, and carried on in their present services. The refreshing that then comes from the presence of the Lord, will continue eternally in the presence of the Lord.

(2.) He tells them what they must do.

1. They must repent, must bethink themselves of what they have done amiss, must return to their right mind, admit a second thought, and submit to the convictions of it; they must begin anew. Peter, who had himself denied Christ, repented, and he would have them to do so too.

2. They must be converted, must face about and direct both their faces and steps the contrary way to what they had been; they must return to the Lord their God, from whom they had revolted. It is not enough to repent of sin, but we must be converted from it, and not return to it again. They must not only exchange the profession of Judaism for that of Christianity, but the power and dominion of a carnal, worldly, sensual mind, for that of holy, heavenly, and divine principles and affections.

3. They must hear Christ, the great prophet; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you: Attend his dictates, receive his doctrine, submit to his government. Hear him with a divine faith, as prophets should be heard, that come with a divine commission. Him shall ye hear, and to him you shall subscribe with an implicit faith and obedience. Hear him in all things; let his laws govern all your actions, and his counsels determine all your submissions: Whenever he has a mouth to speak, you must have an ear to hear: Whatever he saith to us, though never so displeasing to flesh and blood, bid it welcome: Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.

And a good reason is here given why we should be observant of, and obedient to the word of Christ, for it is at our peril if we turn a deaf ear to his call, and a stiff neck to his yoke, ver. 23. Every soul which will not hear that prophet, and be directed by what he saith, shall be destroyed from among the people. The destruction of the city and nation, by war and famine, were threatened for slighting the prophets of the Old Testament, but the destruction of the soul, a spiritual and eternal destruction, is threatened for slighting Christ, this great prophet. They that will not be advised by the Saviour, can expect no other but to fall into the hands of the destroyer.

(3.) He tells them what they might expect.

1. That they should have the pardon of their sins; this is always spoken of as the great privilege of all those that embrace the gospel, ver. 19. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. This implies, 1. That the remission of sin is the blotting

blotting of it out, as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun, Isa. xlv. 22. as a debt is crossed and blotted out, when it is remitted. It intimates, that when God forgives sin, he remembers it no more against the sinner; it is forgotten, as that which is blotted out; all the bitter things written against the sinner, (Job xiii. 26.) are wiped out as it were with a sponge; it is the cancelling of a bond, the vacating of a judgment. 2. We cannot expect that our sins should be pardoned, unless we repent of them, and turn from them to God: Though Christ has died to purchase the remission of sin, yet, that we may have the benefit of that purchase, in the forgiveness of our sins, we must repent, and be converted: If no repentance, no remission. 3. Hopes of the pardon of sin upon repentance should be a powerful inducement to us to repent: Repent, that your sins may be blotted out. And that repentance is evangelical, which flows from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and the hopes of pardon. This was the first and great argument, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 4. The most comfortable fruit of the forgiveness of our sins will be when the times of refreshing shall come; if our sins be forgiven us, we have now reason to be of good cheer; but the comfort will be compleat, when the pardon shall be allowed in open court, and our justification published before angels and men; when, whom he justified, them he glorifies, Rom. viii. 30. As now we are the sons of God, (1 John iii. 2.) so now we have our sins blotted out, but it doth not yet appear what are the blessed fruits of it, till the times of refreshing shall come: During these times of toil and conflicts, doubts and fears within, troubles and dangers without, we cannot have that full satisfaction of our pardon, and in it, that we shall have when the refreshing times come, which shall wipe away all tears.

2. That they should have the comfort of Christ's coming, ver. 20, 21. He shall send Jesus Christ, the same Jesus, the very same which before was preached unto you; for you must not expect another dispensation, another gospel, but the continuance and completion of this; must not expect another prophet like unto Jesus, as Moses bid you expect another like unto him; for though the heavens must receive him till the times of the restitution of all things, yet, if you repent and be converted, you shall find no want of him; some way or other he shall be seen to you.

(1.) We must not expect Christ's personal presence with us in this world; for the heavens, which received him out of the sight of the disciples, must retain him till the end of time: To that seat of the blessed, his bodily presence is confined, and will be to the end of time, the accomplishment of all things; so it may be read: And therefore those dishonour him, and deceive themselves, who dream of his corporal presence in the eucharist. It is agreeable to a state of trial and probation, that the glorified Redeemer should be out of sight, because we must live by that faith in him, which is the evidence of things not seen; because he must be believed on in the world, he must be received up into glory. Dr. Hammond reads it, Who must receive the heavens, i. e. who must receive the glory and power of the upper world; he must reign till all be made subject to him, 1 Cor. xv. 25. Psalm lxxv. 2.

(2.) Yet it is promised that he shall be sent to all that repent, and are converted, ver. 20. He shall send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you by his disciples, both before and since his resurrection, and is, and will be, all in all to them. 1. You shall have his spiritual presence; he that is sent into the world, shall be sent to you; you shall have the comfort of his being sent; he shall be sent among you in his gospel, which shall be his tabernacle, his chariot of war.

2. He shall send Jesus Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and the nation of unbelieving Jews, that are enemies to Christ, and Christianity, and to deliver his ministers and people from them, and give them a quiet possession of the gospel, and that shall be a time of refreshing, which you shall share in. Then had the churches rest; so Dr. Hammond. 3. The sending of Christ to judge the world, at the end of time, will be a blessing to you; you shall then lift up your heads with joy, knowing that your redemption draws nigh: It seems to refer to this, for till then the heavens must receive him, ver. 21. As God's counsels from eternity, so his predictions from the beginning of time, had a reference to the transactions of the last day, when the mystery of God shall be finished, as he had declared to his servants the prophets, Rev. x. 7. The institution of all things in the church, had an eye to the restitution of all things at the end of time.

(4.) He tells them what ground they had to expect these things, if they were converted to Christ: Though they had denied him, and put him to death, yet they might hope to find favour through him, upon the account of their being Israelites: For,

1. As Israelites, they had the monopoly of the grace of the Old Testament, they were above any other of God's favourite nation, and the favours God bestowed upon them were such as had a reference to the Messiah, and his kingdom: Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant: A double privilege!

(1.) They were the children, that is, the disciples of the prophets, as children at school; not sons of the prophets, in the sense that we read of such in the Old Testament, from Samuel, and downwards, who were, or are trained up to be endued with the spirit of prophecy; but you are of that people, from among whom

prophets were raised up, and to whom prophets were sent: It is spoken of as a great favour to Israel, that God raised up of their sons for prophets, Amos ii. 11. All the inspired writers, both of the Old and New Testament, were of the seed of Abraham; and it was their honour and advantage, that unto them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. Their government was constituted by prophecy, that is, by divine revelation; and by it their affairs were for many ages very much managed: See Hos. xii. 13. By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. Those of the latter ages of the church, when prophecy was ceased, yet might be fitly called the children of the prophets, because they heard, though they did not know the voices of the prophets, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day, Acts xiii. 27. Now this should quicken them to embrace Christ, and they might hope to be accepted of him, for their own prophets had foretold, that this grace should be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 13. and therefore ought not to be neglected by them, nor should be denied to them. Those that are blessed with prophets and prophecy, as all are that have the scriptures, are concerned, not to receive the grace of God therein in vain. We may apply it particularly to ministers children, who, if they plead that effectually with themselves, as an inducement to be faithful and forward in religion, may comfortably plead it with God, and hope that the children of God's servants shall continue.

(2.) They were the children, that is, the heirs of the covenant, which God made with our fathers, as children in the family. God's covenant was made with Abraham, and his seed, and they were that seed, with whom the covenant was made, and on whom the blessings of the covenant were entailed; the promise of the Messiah was made to you, and therefore if you forsake not your own mercies, and do not, by an obstinate infidelity, put a bar in your own door, you may hope it shall be made good to you. That promise here mentioned, as the principal article of the covenant, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed, though referring principally to Christ, Gal. iii. 16. yet may include the church also, which is his body, all believers, that are the spiritual seed of Abraham; all the kindreds of the earth were blessed, in having a church for Christ among them; and those that were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, stood fairest for this privilege: If all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed in Christ, much more that kindred, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

2. As Israelites, they had the first offer of the grace of the New Testament: Because they were the children of the prophets, and the covenant, therefore to them the Redeemer was first sent; which was an encouragement to them to hope, that if they did repent, and were converted, he should be yet further sent for their comfort, ver. 20. He shall send Jesus Christ, for to you first he hath sent him, ver. 26. Unto you first, you Jews, though not to you only, God having raised up his Son Jesus, appointed and authorized him to be a Prince, and a Saviour, and, in confirmation of that, raised him from the dead, sent him to bless you, to make a tender of his blessing to you, especially that great blessing of turning every one of you from his iniquities, and therefore it concerns you to receive this blessing, and turn from your iniquities, and you may be encouraged to hope that you shall.

(1.) We are here told whence Christ had his mission; God raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him. God raised him up, when he constituted him a prophet, owned him by a voice from heaven, and filled him with his Spirit without measure, and then sent him; for to that end he raised him up, that he might be his commissioner to treat of peace: He sent him to bear witness of the truth, sent him to seek and save lost souls, sent him against his enemies to conquer them. Some refer the raising of him up, to the resurrection, which was the first step towards his exaltation; that was, as it were, the renewing of his commission; and though, having raised him up, he seemed presently to take him from us, yet he did really send him afresh to us, in his gospel and Spirit.

(2.) To whom he was sent; Unto you first. You of the seed of Abraham, you that are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, to you is the tender made of gospel grace. The personal ministry of Christ, as that of the prophets, was confined to the Jews; he was not then sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and forbade the disciples, he then sent forth, to go any further: After his resurrection, he was to be preached indeed to all nations, but they must begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. And when they went to other nations, they first preached to the Jews they found therein: They were the first-born, and, as such, had the first privilege of the offer: So far were they from being excluded, for their putting of Christ to death, that, when he is risen, he is first sent to them, and they are primarily intended to have benefit by his death.

(3.) On what errand he was sent; He is sent to you first, to bless you, that is his primary errand, not to condemn you, as you deserve, but to justify you, if you will accept of the justification offered you, in the way wherein it is offered; but he that sends him first to bless you, if you refuse and reject that blessing, will send him to curse you with a curse, Mal. iv. 6. Note, 1. Christ's errand into the world was to bless us, to bring a blessing with him, for the joy of righteousness rose with healing under his wings; and when he first

world, he left a blessing behind him, for he was parted from the disciples as he blessed them, Luke xxiv. 51. He sent his Spirit to be the great blessing, the blessing of blessings, *Isa.* xlv. 3. It is by Christ that God sends blessings to us, and through him only we can expect to receive them. 2. The great blessing wherewith Christ came to bless us, was the turning of us away from our iniquities, the saving of us from our sins, *Matt.* i. 21. to turn us from sin, that we may be qualified to receive all other blessings; sin is that which naturally we cleave to, the design of divine grace is to turn us from it, nay, to turn us against it, that we may not only forsake it, but hate it; the gospel has a direct tendency to it, not only as it requires us, or every one of us, to turn from our iniquities, but as it promiseth us grace to enable us to do so: Therefore, do your part, repent and be converted, because Christ is ready to do his, in turning you from your iniquities, and so blessing you.

C H A P. IV.

In going over the two last chapters, where we met with so many good things that the apostles did, I wondered what was become of the Scribes and Pharisees, and chief priests, that they did not appear to contradict and oppose them, as they had used to treat Christ himself; sure, they were so confounded at first with the pouring out of the Spirit, that they were for a time struck dumb! but I find we have not lost them, their forces rally again, and here we have an encounter between them and the apostles; for from the beginning the gospel met with opposition. Here, 1. Peter and John are taken up upon a warrant from the priests, and committed to jail, ver. 1,—4. 2. They are examined by a committee of the great Sanhedrin, ver. 5,—7. 3. They bravely avow what they have done, and preach Christ to their persecutors, ver. 8,—12. 4. Their persecutors being unable to answer them, enjoin them silence, threaten them if they go on to preach the gospel, and so dismiss them, ver. 13,—22. 5. They apply themselves to God by prayer, for the further operations of that grace which they had already experienced, ver. 23,—30. 6. God owns them, both outwardly and inwardly, by manifest tokens of his presence with them, ver. 31,—33. 7. The believers had their hearts knit together in holy love, and enlarged their charity to the poor, and the church flourished more than ever, to the glory of Christ, ver. 33, 34,—37.

1. **A**ND as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them; 2. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now even-tide. 4. Howbeit, many of them which heard the word, believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

We have here the interests of the kingdom of heaven successfully carried on, and the powers of darkness appearing against them to put a stop to them: Let Christ's servants be never so resolute, Satan's agents will be spiteful; and therefore let Satan's agents be never so spiteful, Christ's servants ought to be resolute.

First, The apostles, Peter and John, went on in their work, and did not labour in vain: The Spirit enabled the ministers to do their part, and the people theirs.

1. The preachers faithfully delivered the doctrine of Christ; *They spake unto the people*, to all that were within hearing, ver. 1. What they said concerned them all, and they spoke it openly, and publicly. *They taught the people*, still taught the people knowledge; taught those that as yet did not believe, for their conviction and conversion; and taught those that did believe, for their comfort and establishment: *They preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* This doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, (1.) Was verified in Jesus; this they proved, that *Jesus Christ was risen from the dead*, was the first, the chief that should rise from the dead, *Acts* xxvi. 23. *They preached the resurrection of Christ*, as their warrant for what they did. Or, (2.) It is secured by him to all believers: *The resurrection of the dead* includes all the happiness of the future state, this they preached through Jesus Christ, attainable through him, (*Phil.* iii. 10, 11.) and through him only: They meddled not with matters of state, but kept to their business, and preached to people heaven as their end, and Christ as their way: See *Acts* xvii. 18.

2. The hearers cheerfully receive it, ver. 4. *Many of them which heard the word, believed*; not all, perhaps, not the most, yet many, to the number of about five thousand, over and above the three thousand, we read of before. See how the gospel got ground, and it was the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit! Though the preachers were persecuted, the word prevailed; for sometimes the church's suffering days, have been her growing days; the days of her infancy were so.

Secondly, *The chief priests*, and their party, now made head against them, and did what they could to crush them; their hands

were tied a while, but their hearts were not in the least changed. Now here observe,

1. Who they were that appeared against the apostles; they were the priests; you may be sure in the first place they were always sworn enemies to Christ, and his gospel; they were as jealous for their priesthood, as Cesar for his monarchy, and would not bear one they thought their rival now when he was preached as a priest, as much as when he did preach as a prophet: With them joined the captain of the temple, who, it is supposed, was a Roman officer, governor of the garrison that was placed in the tower of Antonia, for the guard of the temple: So that still here were both Jews and Gentiles confederate against Christ. The Sadducees also were zealous against them, who denied the being of spirits, and the future state. "One would wonder (saith Mr. Baxter) what should make such brutifts, as the Sadducees were, to be such furious silencers and persecutors: If there is no life to come, what harm can other mens hopes of it do them? But in depraved souls all faculties are vitiated: A blind mind has a malignant heart, and a cruel hand, to this day."

2. How they stood affected to the apostles preaching: *They were grieved that they taught the people*, ver. 2. It grieved them, both that the gospel doctrine was preached, was so preached, so publicly, so boldly, and that the people were so ready to hear it. They thought, when they had put Christ to such an ignominious death, his disciples would ever after be ashamed and afraid to own him, and the people would have invincible prejudices against his doctrine; and now it vexed them to see themselves disappointed, and that his gospel gets ground, instead of losing it: *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved*, *Psal.* cxii. ult. They were grieved at that which they should have rejoiced in, at that which angels rejoice in. Miserable is their case, to whom the glory of Christ's kingdom is a grief; for since the glory of that kingdom is everlasting, it follows of course, that their grief will be everlasting too. It grieved them that the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees were grieved that the resurrection from the dead was preached; for they opposed that doctrine, and could not bear to hear of a future state, to hear it so well attested: *The chief priests* were grieved that they preached the resurrection of the dead through Jesus, that he should have the honour of it; and though they professed to believe the resurrection of the dead against the Sadducees, yet they would rather give up that important article, than have it preached, and proved to be through Jesus.

3. How far they proceeded against the apostles, ver. 3. *They laid hands on them* (that is, their servants and officers did, at their command) and put them in hold, committed them to the custody of the proper officer, unto the next day; they could not examine them now, for it was even-tide, and yet would defer it no longer than till next day. See how God trains up his servants for sufferings by degrees, and, by lesser trials, prepares them for greater; now they resist unto bonds only, but afterwards to blood.

5. ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6. And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name have ye done this? 8. Then Peter filled with the holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9. If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10. Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. 13. ¶ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

We have here the trial of Peter and John before the judges of the ecclesiastical court, for preaching a sermon concerning Jesus Christ, and working a miracle in his name: This is charged upon them as a crime, which was the best service they could do to God or men.

1. Here is the court set; an extraordinary court, it should seem, was called on purpose upon this occasion. Observe,

1. The time when the court sat, *ver. 5. on the morrow*, not in the night, as when Christ was to be tried before them, for they seem not to have been so hot upon this prosecution as they were upon that; it was well if they began to relent. But they adjourned it to the morrow and no longer, for they were impatient to get them silenced, and would lose no time.

2. The place where, in *Jerusalem*, *ver. 6.* there it was that he told his disciples they must expect to suffer hard things, as he had done before them in that place. This seems to come in here as an aggravation of their sin, that in Jerusalem where there were so many that looked for redemption before it came, yet there were more that would not look upon it when it did come. How is that faithful city become a harlot! See *Mat. xxiii. 37.* It was in the foresight of Jerusalem's standing in her own light, that Christ beheld the city and wept over it.

3. The judges of the court. 1. Their general character, they were *rulers, elders, and scribes*, *ver. 5.* The Scribes were men of learning, who came to dispute with the apostles, and hoped to confute them: The rulers and elders were men in power, who if they could not answer them, thought they could find some cause or other to silence them. If the gospel of Christ had not been of God it could not have made its way, for it had both the learning and power of the world against it, both the colleges of the scribes, and courts of the elders. 2. The names of some of them who were most considerable. Here were Annas and Caiaphas, ring-leaders in this persecution, Annas the president of the Sanhedrin, and Caiaphas, the high priest (though Annas is here called so) and father of the house of judgment. It should seem that Annas and Caiaphas executed the high priest's office alternately, year for year; they two were most active against Christ, then Caiaphas was high priest, now Annas was; however, they were both equally malignant against Christ, and his gospel. John is supposed to be the Son of Annas; and Alexander is mentioned by Josephus, as a man that made a figure at that time. There were others likewise that were of the kindred of the high priest, that having dependence on him, and expectations from him, would be sure to say as he said, and vote with him against the apostles. Great relations and not good, have been a snare to many.

Secondly, The prisoners are arraigned, *ver. 7.*

1. They are brought to the bar, they *set them in the midst*, for the Sanhedrin sat in a circle, and they who had any thing to do in the court stood or sat in the midst of them, *Luke ii. 46.* so Dr. Lightfoot. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, *the assembly of the wicked has inclosed me*, *Psal. xxii. 16.* *They compassed me about like bees*, *Psal. cxviii. 12.* They were seated on every side.

2. The question they asked them was, *By what power, or by what name have ye done this?* By what authority do ye these things? The same question that they had asked their Master, *Mat. xxi. 23.* who commissioned you to preach such a doctrine as this, and empowered you to work such a miracle as this? You have no warrant or license from us, and therefore are accountable to us whence you have warrant. Some think this question was grounded upon a fond conceit that the very naming of some names might do wonders, as *Acts xix. 13.* The Jewish exorcists made use of the name of Jesus. Now they would know what name they made use of in their cure, and consequently what name they set themselves to advance in their preaching. They knew very well that they preached Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead, and the healing of the sick, *through Jesus*, *ver. 2.* yet they ask them to tease them, and try if they could get any thing out of them that looked criminal.

Thirdly, The plea they put in, the design of which was not so much to clear and secure themselves, as to advance the name and honour of their Master, who had told them that their being brought before governours and kings would give them an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those whom otherwise they could not have had access to, and it should be a testimony against them. *Mark xiii. 9.* Observe,

1. By whom this plea was drawn up, it was dictated by the holy Ghost, who fitted Peter more than before, for this occasion. The apostles with a holy negligence of their own preservation, set themselves to preach Christ, as he had directed them to do in such a case, and then Christ made good to them his promise, that the holy Ghost should give them in that same hour what they should speak. Christ's faithful advocates shall never want instructions, *Mark xiii. 11.*

2. To whom it was given in, Peter; who is still the chief speaker, addresseth himself to the judges of the court, as the rulers of the people and elders of Israel, for the wickedness of those in power doth not divest them of their power, but the consideration of the power they are intrusted with, should prevail to divest them of their wickedness. You are rulers and elders, and should know more than others of the signs of the times, and not oppose that which you are bound by the duty of your place to embrace and advance, that is the kingdom of the Messiah; you are rulers and elders of Israel, God's people, and if you mislead them, and cause them to err, you will have a great deal to answer for.

3. What the plea is; it is a solemn declaration,

1. That what they did was in the name of Jesus Christ which was a direct answer to the question the court asked them,

ver. 9, 10. If we this day be examined, be called to an account as criminals, so the word signifies, for a good deed (as any one will own it to be) done to the impotent man, if this be the ground of the commitment, this the matter of the indictment, if we are put to the question, by what means, or by whom he is made whole; we have an answer ready, and it is the same we gave to the people, *chap. iii. 16.* we will repeat it to you, as that which we will stand by, *Be it known to you all* who pretend to be ignorant of this matter, and not to you only, but to all the people of Israel, for they are all concerned to know it, that by the name of Jesus Christ, that precious, powerful, prevailing name, that name above every name, even by him whom you in contempt called Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, both rulers and people, and whom God hath raised from the dead, and advanced to the highest dignity and dominion, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole; a monument of the power of the Lord Jesus. Here, 1. He justifies what he and his colleague had done in curing the lame man; it was a good deed; it was a kindness to the man that had begged but could not work for his living; a kindness to the temple, and to them that went into worship, who were now freed from the noise and clamour of that common beggar. Now if we be reckoned with for this good deed, we have no reason to be ashamed, *1 Pet. ii. 20.* *chap. iv. 14, 16.* Let them be ashamed who bring us into trouble for it. Note, It is no new thing for good men to suffer ill for doing well. *Bene agere & male pati vere Christianum est.*

2. He transfers all the praise and glory of that good deed to Jesus Christ. It is by him, and not by any power of ours, that this man is cured; he seeks not to raise an interest for themselves or to recommend themselves by it to the good opinion of the court, but let the Lord alone be exalted, no matter what comes of us.

3. He charges it upon the judges themselves that they had been the murderers of this Jesus; it is he whom ye crucified, look how you will answer it; in order to the bringing of them to believe in Christ (for he aims at no less than that) he endeavours to convince them of sin, of that sin which, one would think, of all other, was most likely to startle conscience, their putting Christ to death. Let them take it how they will, Peter will balk no occasion to tell them of it.

4. He attests the resurrection of Christ as the strongest testimony to him, and against his persecutors, they crucified him, but God raised him from the dead, they took away his life, but God gave it him again, and your further opposition to his interest will breed no better. He tells them God raised him from the dead, and they could not for shame answer him with that foolish suggestion that they palmed upon the people, that his disciples came by night and stole him away.

5. He preaches this to all the by-standers, to be by them repeated to all their neighbours, and commands all manner of persons, from the highest to the lowest, to take notice of it at their peril; *Be it known to you all*, that are here present, and it shall be made known to all the people of Israel, wherever they are dispersed, in spite of all your endeavours to stifle and suppress the notice of it; as the Lord God of gods knows, so Israel shall know, all Israel shall know that wonders are wrought in the name of Jesus, not by repeating it as a charm, but believing in it as a divine revelation of grace and good will to men.

2. That the name of this Jesus by the authority of which they acted, is that name alone by which men can be saved. He passeth from this particular instance to shew, that it is not a particular sect, a party that is designed to be set up by the doctrine they preached, and the miracle they wrought, which people might either join with, or keep off from at their pleasure, as it was with the sects of the philosophers, and those among the Jews; but it is a sacred and divine institution that is hereby ratified and confirmed, and which all people are highly concerned to submit to, and come into the measures of. It is not an indifferent thing, but of an absolute necessity that people believe in this name, and call upon it.

1. We are obliged to it in duty to God, and in compliance with his designs, *ver. 11.* This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, you that are the rulers of the people, and the elders of Israel, that should be the builders of the church, that pretend to be so; for the church is God's building: Here was a stone offered you to be put in the chief place of the building, to be the main pillar on which the fabrick might intirely rest. but you set it at naught, rejected it, would not make use of it, but threw it by as good for nothing but to make a stepping-stone, but this stone is now become the head of the corner; God has raised up this Jesus, whom you rejected, and by setting him at his right hand, has made him both the corner-stone, and the head-stone, the center of unity, and the fountain of power. Probably, St. Peter here chose to make use of this quotation, because Christ had himself made use of it in answer to the demand of the chief priests and the elders concerning his authority, not long before this, *Mat. xxi. 43.* Scripture is a tried weapon in our spiritual conflicts, let us therefore stick to it.

2. We are obliged to it for our own interest: We are undone if we do not take shelter in this name, and make it our refuge and strong tower; for we cannot be saved but by Jesus Christ, and if we be not eternally saved, we are eternally undone, *ver. 12.* Nei-

ther is there salvation in any other. As there is no other name by which diseased bodies can be cured, so there is no other by which sinful souls can be saved, "By him, and him only, by receiving" and embracing his doctrine, salvation must *now be hoped for by* "All: For there is no other religion in the world, no, not that delivered by Moses, by which salvation can be had for those that do not now come in to this, at the preaching of it". So Dr. Hammond. Observe here, 1. Our salvation is our chief concern, and that which ought to lie nearest our hearts; our rescue from wrath and the curse, and our restoration to God's favour and blessing. 2. Our salvation is not in ourselves, nor can be obtained by any merit or strength of our own; we can destroy ourselves, but we cannot save ourselves. 3. There are among men many names that pretend to be saving names, but really are not so; many institutions in religion that pretend to settle a reconciliation and correspondence between God and man, but cannot do it. 4. It is only by Christ, and his name that those favours can be expected from God which are necessary to our salvation, and that our services can be accepted with God. This is the honour of Christ's name, that it is the *only name whereby we must be saved*; the only name we have to plead in all our addresses to God. This name is given, God has appointed it, and it is an inestimable benefit freely conferred upon us. It is given *under heaven*; Christ has not only a great name *in heaven*, but a great name *under heaven*; for he has all power both in the upper and in the lower world: It is given *among men* who need salvation, men who are ready to perish. We may be saved *by his name*, that name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*; and we cannot be saved by any other. How far those who have not the knowledge of Christ, nor any actual faith in him, yet live up to the light they have, may find favour with God, it is not our business to determine: But this we know, that whatever saving favour such may receive, it is upon the account of Christ, and for his sake only; so that still *there is not salvation in any other, I have furnished thee, though thou hast not known me*, Isa. xlv. 4.

Fourthly, The stand that the court was put to in the prosecution, by this plea, *ver. 13, 14.* Now was fulfilled that promise Christ made, that he would give them *a mouth and wisdom*, such as *all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist*.

1. They could not deny the cure of the lame man, to be both a *good deed* and a *miracle*; he was there standing with Peter and John, ready to attest the cure, if there was occasion, and they had *nothing to say against it*, *ver. 14.* either to disprove it, or to disparage it: It was well it was *not on the sabbath-day*, else they would have had that to say against it.

2. They could not, with all their pomp and power, face down Peter and John; this was a miracle not inferior to the cure of the lame man, considering both what cruel bloody enemies these priests had been to the name of Christ, enough to make any one tremble that appeared for him; and considering what cowardly fainthearted advocates those disciples had lately been for him; Peter particularly, who denied him for fear of a silly maid; yet now they see *the boldness of Peter and John*, *ver. 13.* Probably, there was something extraordinary and very surprising in their looks, they appeared not only undaunted by the rulers, but daring and daunting to them; they had something majestic in their foreheads, sparkling in their eyes, and commanding, if not terrifying, in their voice. *They set their faces like a flint*, as the prophet, *Isa. i. 7. Ezek. iii. 8.* The courage of Christ's faithful confessors has often been the confusion of their cruel persecutors. Now,

1. We are here told what increased their wonder; they *perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men*: They enquired either of themselves or others, and found that they were of mean extraction, born in Galilee, that they were bred fishermen, and had no learned education, had never been at any university, were not brought up at the feet of any of the Rabbins, had never been conversant in courts, camps, or colleges; nay, perhaps talk to them at this time upon any point in natural philosophy, mathematicks or politicks, and you will find they know nothing of the matter; and yet speak to them of the Messiah and his kingdom, and they speak with so much clearness, evidence and assurance, so pertinently, and so fluently, and are so ready in the scriptures of the Old Testament relating to it, that the learnedest judge upon the bench is not able to answer them, or to enter the lists with them. They were *ignorant men*, *idiotæ private men*, men that had not any publick character or employment; and therefore they wondered they should have such high pretensions. They were *idiotæ*, so the word signifies; they looked upon them with as much contempt as if they had been *mere naturals*, and expected no more from them, which made them wonder to see what freedom they took.

2. We are told what made their wonder in a great measure to cease, they *saw knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus*; they themselves, it is probable, had seen them with him in the temple, and now recollected that they had seen them, or some of their friends, or those about them, informed them of it, for they would not be thought themselves to have taken notice of such inferior people: But when they understood *that they had been with Jesus*, had been conversant with him, attendant on him, and trained up under him, they knew what to impute their boldness to;

nay, their boldness in divine things was enough to shew with whom they had had their education. Note, Those that *have been with Jesus*, in converse and communion with him, have been attending on his word, praying in his name, and celebrating the memorials of his death and resurrection, should carry themselves, in every thing, as that those who converse with them, may *take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus*. And that makes them so holy and heavenly, and spiritual, and cheerful; that has raised them so much above this world, and filled them with another. One may know that they have been in the mount by the shining of their faces.

15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16. Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is manifest* to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. 21. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. 22. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

We have here the issue of the trial of Peter and John before the council; they came off now with flying colours, because they must be trained up to sufferings by degrees; and by lesser trials be prepared for greater; they now but *run with the jestmen*, hereafter we shall have them *contending with horses*, Jer. xii. 5.

First, Here is the consultation and resolution of the court about this matter, and their proceeding thereupon.

1. The prisoners were ordered to withdraw, *ver. 15.* They *commanded them to go aside out of the council*; willing enough to get clear of them, they spoke so home to their consciences, and not willing they should hear the acknowledgments that were extorted from them: But though they might not hear them, we have them here upon record. The designs of Christ's enemies are carried on in *close cabals*, and they dig deep, as if they would hide their counsels from the Lord.

2. A debate arose upon this matter; *they conferred among themselves*; every one is desired to speak his mind freely, and to give advice upon this important affair. *Now the scripture was fulfilled*, that the rulers would *take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed*, *Psal. ii. 2.* the question proposed was, *What shall we do to these men?* *ver. 16.* If they would have yielded to the convincing, commanding power of truth, it had been easy to say what they should do to these men: They should have placed them at the head of their council, and received their doctrine, and been baptized by them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and joined in fellowship with them: But when men will not be persuaded to do what they should do, it is no marvel they are ever and anon at a loss what to do. The truths of Christ, if men would but entertain them as they should, would give them no manner of trouble or uneasiness, but if they *persecute or imprison them in unrighteousness*, *Rom. i. 18.* they will find them a burthensome stone that they will not know what to do with, *Zech. xii. 4.*

3. They came at last to a resolution, in two things.

1. That it was not safe to punish the apostles for what they had done; very willingly they would have done it, but they had not courage to do it, because the people espoused their cause, and cried up the miracle; and they stood now in as much awe of them as they had done formerly, when they durst not lay hands on Christ *for fear of the people*. By which it appears that the outcry of the mob against our Saviour, was a forced or managed thing, the stream soon returned to its former chanel. Now they *could not find how they might punish Peter and John*, what colour they might have for it, *because of the people*. They knew it would be an unrighteous thing to punish them, and therefore should have been restrained from it by the fear of God; but they considered it only as a dangerous thing, and therefore were held in from it only by the fear of *the people*. For,

(1.) The people were convinced of the truth of the miracle; it was a *notable miracle*, *γνώσιμον σημεῖον*, a known miracle; it was known that they did it in Christ's name, and that Christ himself had often done the like before; this was a known instance of the power of Christ, and proof of his doctrine, that it was a great miracle, and wrought for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached, (for it was a *sign*) was *manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem*, it was an opinion universally received, and the miracle being wrought at the gate of the temple, universal notice was taken of it; and they themselves, with all the craft and all the front they had, *could not deny*

deny it to be a true miracle ; every body would have hooted at them if they had. They could easily deny it to their own consciences but not to the world. The proofs of the gospel were undeniable.

(2.) They went further, and were not only convinced of the truth of the miracle, but all men glorified God for that which was done ; even those that were not persuaded by it to believe in Christ, yet were so affected with it as a mercy to a poor man, and an honour to their country, that they could not but give praise to God for it ; even natural religion taught them to do that. And if the priests had punished Peter and John for that for which all men glorified God, they would have lost all their interest in the people, and been abandoned as enemies both to God and man. Thus therefore their wrath shall be made to praise God, and the remainder thereof shall be restrained.

2. They yet resolve, that it is necessary to silence them for the future, ver. 17, 18. They could not prove that they had said or done any thing amiss, and yet they must no more say or do what they have done. All their care is, that the doctrine of Christ spread no further among the people ; as if that healing institution were a plague begun, the contagion of which must be stopped. See how the malice of hell fights against the counsels of heaven ; God will have the knowledge of Christ to spread all the world over, but the chief priests would have it spread no further, which he that sits in heaven laughs at.

Now to prevent the further spreading of this doctrine ;

1. They charge the apostles never to preach it any more : *Be it enacted by their authority*, (which they think every Israelite is bound in conscience to submit to,) That no man speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus, ver. 18. We do not find that they give them any reason why the doctrine of Christ must be suppressed ; they cannot say, it is either false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency, and are ashamed to own the true reason, that it testifies against their hypocrisy and wickedness, and shocks their tyranny : But, *stat pro ratione voluntas*, we straitly charge and command you, not only that you do not preach this doctrine publicly, but that ye speak henceforth to no man, not to any particular person privately, in this name, ver. 17. There is not a greater service done to the devil's kingdom than the silencing of faithful ministers, and the putting them under a bushel that are the lights of the world.

2. They threaten them if they do, straitly threaten them ; it is at their peril. This court will reckon itself highly affronted if they do, and they shall fall under its displeasure. Christ had not only charged them to preach the gospel to every creature, but had promised to bear them out in it, and reward them for it. Now these priests not only forbid them to preach the gospel, but threaten to punish it as a heinous crime ; but those who know how to put a just value upon Christ's promises, know how to put a just contempt upon the world's threatnings, though they be threatnings of slaughter that it breathes out, Acts ix. 1.

Secondly, Here is the courageous resolution of the prisoners to go on in their work, notwithstanding the resolutions of this court, and their declaration of this resolution, ver. 19, 20. Peter and John needed not confer together to know one another's minds, for they were both acted by one and the same Spirit, but agree presently in the same sentiments, and jointly put in the answer, *Whether it be right in the sight of God*, to whom both you and we are accountable, to hearken unto you more than unto God, we appeal to yourselves, judge ye ; For we cannot forbear speaking to every body the things which we have seen and heard, and are ourselves full of, and are charged to publish. The prudence of the serpent would have directed them to be silent, and though they could not with a good conscience promise that they would not preach the gospel any more, yet they needed not tell them that they would : But the boldness of the lion directed them thus to set both the authority and the malignity of their persecutors at defiance.

They do in effect tell them, they are resolved to go on in preaching, and justify themselves in it with two things.

1. The command of God ; you charge us not to preach the gospel, he hath charged us to preach it, has committed it to us as a trust, requiring us upon our allegiance faithfully to dispense it ; now whom must we obey ; God or you ? There they appeal to one of the *communis notitiæ*, to a settled and acknowledged maxim in the law of nature, that if mens commands and God's interfere, God's commands must take place. It is a rule in the common-law of England, that if any statute be made contrary to the law of God, it is null and void. Nothing can be more absurd than to hearken unto weak and fallible men that are fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects, more than unto a God that is infinitely wise and holy, our Creator and sovereign Lord, and the Judge to whom we are all accountable. The case is so plain, so uncontroverted and selfevident, that we will venture to leave it to yourselves to judge of it, though you are biased and prejudiced. Can you think it right in the sight of God to break a divine command in obedience to a human injunction ? That is right indeed, which is right in the sight of God ; for his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, and therefore by that we ought to govern ourselves.

2. The convictions of their own consciences ; though they had not had such an express command from heaven to preach the doctrine of Christ, yet they could not but speak, and speak publicly those things which they had seen and heard. Like Elisha they were full

of this matter, and the Spirit within them constrained them, they must speak that they might be retriethed, Job xxxii. 18, 20.

1. They felt the influence of it upon themselves, what a blessed change it hath wrought upon them, has brought them into a new world, and therefore they cannot but speak of it : And those speak the doctrine of Christ best, that have felt the power of it, and tasted the sweetness of it, and have themselves been deeply affected with it ; it is as a fire in their bones, Jer. xx. 19. 2. They know the importance of it to others ; they look with concern upon perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, and therefore will be faithful to them in giving them warning and shewing them the right way. They are things which we have seen and heard, and therefore are fully assured of ourselves ; and things which we only have seen and heard ; and therefore, if we do not publish them, Who will ? Who can ? Knowing the favour, as well as the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ; for the love of Christ, and the love of souls constraineth us, 2 Cor. v. 11, 14.

Thirdly, There is the discharge of the prisoners, ver. 21. They further threatened them, and thought they frightened them, and then let them go. There were many whom they terrified into an obedience to their unrighteous decrees, they knew how to keep men in awe with their excommunications, John ix. 22. and thought they could have the same influence upon the apostles that they had upon other men ; but they were deceived, for they had been with Jesus. They threatened them, and that was all they did now ; when they had done that, they let them go,

1. Because they durst not contradict the people, who glorified God for that which was done, and would have been ready (at least they thought so) to pull them out of their seats, if they had punished the apostles for doing it. As rulers by the ordinance of God are made a terror and restraint to wicked people ; so people are sometimes by the providence of God made a terror and restraint to wicked rulers.

2. Because they could not contradict the miracle. For, ver. 22. the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was shewed. And therefore, 1. The miracle was so much the greater : he having been lame from his mother's womb, chap. iii. 2. The older he grew the more inveterate the disease was, and the more hardly cured. If those that are grown into years, and have been long accustomed to evil, yet are cured of their spiritual impotency to good, and thereby of their evil customs, the power of divine grace is therein so much the more magnified. 2. The truth of it was so much the better attested ; for the man being above forty years old, he was able, like the blind man whom Christ healed, when he was asked, to speak for himself, John ix. 21.

23. ¶ And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24. And when they heard that, they lift up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is : 25. Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ? 26. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together. 28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29. And now, Lord, behold their threatnings : and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30. By stretching forth thine hand to heal : and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31. ¶ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were all filled with the holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

We hear no more at present of the chief priests, what they did when they had dismissed Peter and John, but are to attend those two witnesses. And here we have,

First, Their return to their brethren, the apostles and ministers, and perhaps some private Christians. Ver. 23. Being let go, they went to their own company, who perhaps were at this time met together in pain for them, and praying for them ; as Acts xii. 12. As soon as ever they were at liberty they went to their old friends, and returned to their church fellowship.

1. Though God had highly honoured them, in calling them out to be his witnesses, and enabling them to acquit themselves so well, yet they were not puffed up with the honour done them, but thought themselves thereby exalted above their brethren, but went to their own company. No advancement in gifts or usefulness, should make us think ourselves above either the duties or the privileges of the communion of saints.

2. Though

2. Though their enemies had severely threatened them, and endeavoured to break their knot, and frighten them from the work they were jointly engaged in; yet they *went to their own company*, and feared not the wrath of their rulers. They might have had comfort, if being let go, they had retired to their closets, and spent some time in devotion there: But they were men in a publick station, and must seek not so much their own personal satisfaction, as the publick good. And Christ's followers do best in company, provided it be in *their own company*.

Secondly, The account they gave them of what had passed; they *reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them*, adding, no doubt, what they were enabled by the grace of God to reply to them, and how their trial issued. They related it to them,

1. That they might know what to expect both from men, and from God in the progress of their work; from men they might expect every thing that was terrifying, but from God every thing that was encouraging; men would do their utmost to *run them down*, but God would take effectual care to *bear them up*. Thus the *brethren in the Lord would wax confident through their bonds*, and their experiences, as *Phil. i. 14*.

2. That they might have it recorded in the history of the church for the benefit of posterity, particularly for the confirmation of our faith touching the resurrection of Christ. The silence of an adversary, in some cases, is next door to the consent and testimony of an adversary. These apostles told the chief priests to their faces, that God had *raised up Jesus from the dead*, and though they were a body of them together, they had not the confidence to deny it; but in the silliest and most sneaking manner imaginable, bid the apostles not tell any body of it.

3. That they might now join with them in prayers and praises; and by such a comfort as this God would be the more glorified, and the church the more edified. We should therefore communicate to our brethren the providences of God that are concerning us, and our experience of his presence with us, that they may assist us in our acknowledgment of God therein.

Thirdly, Their address to God upon this occasion; *When they heard of the impotent malice of the priests, and the potent courage of the sufferers, they called their company together, and went to prayer; They lift up their voice to God with one accord*, ver. 24. Not that it can be supposed, that they all said the same words at the same time, though it was possible they might, being all inspired by one and the same Spirit, but one in the name of the rest *lift up his voice to God*, and the rest joined with him, *ἑμψύμαδον*, with *one mind*, so the word signifies, their hearts went along with him, and so though but one spoke, they all prayed; one *lift up his voice*, and, in concurrence with him, they all *lift up their hearts*, which was in effect lifting up their voice to God; for thoughts are words to God. *Angels cried unto God*, when we find not a word he said.

Now in this solemn address to God, we have,

1. Their adoration of God as the creator of the world, ver. 24. With *one mind*, and so, in effect, with *one mouth* they glorified God, (Rom. xv. 6.) They *said, O Lord, thou art God, God alone; Δέσποτα*, thou art *our Master and sovereign ruler*, (so the word signifies) art God; God and not Man; God and not the work of mens hands; the Creator of All, and not the creature of mens fancies. Thou art the *God which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea*, the upper and lower world, and all the creatures that are in both. Thus we Christians distinguish ourselves from the heathen, that while they worship gods which they have made, we are worshipping the God that made us and all the world: And it is very proper to begin our prayers, as well as our creed, with the acknowledgment of this, that God is the *Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible*. Though the apostles were at this time full of the mystery of the world's redemption, yet they do not forget or overlook the history of the world's creation; for the Christian religion was intended to confirm and improve, not to eclipse or juggle out the truths and dictates of natural religion. It is a great encouragement to God's servants, both in doing work, and suffering work, that they serve the God that made all things, and therefore has the disposal of their times, and all events concerning them, and is able to strengthen them under all their difficulties. And if we give him the glory of this, we may take the comfort of it.

2. Their reconciling themselves to the present dispensations of providence by reflecting upon those scriptures in the Old Testament which foretold that the kingdom of the Messiah would meet with such opposition as this at the first setting of it up in the world, ver. 25, 26. God that *made heaven and earth*, cannot meet with any opposition to his designs, since none dare dispute or contest with him: Yea, thus it was written, *Thus he spoke by the mouth*, thus he wrote by the pen, *of his servant David*, who as appears by this was the penman of the second psalm, and therefore most probably of the first, and other psalms that are not ascribed to any other, though they have not his name in the title. Let it not therefore be a surprise to them, or any discouragement to any in embracing their doctrine, for the *scripture must be fulfilled*. It was foretold, *Psal. ii. 1, 2*. 1. *That the heathen would rage at Christ and his kingdom, and be angry at the attempts to set it up, because that would be the pulling down of the gods of the heathen, and giving check*

to the wickedness of the heathen. 2. *That the people would imagine all the things that could be against it, to silence the teachers of it, to discountenance the subjects of it, and to crush all the interests of it: And if they prove vain things in the issue, that is no thanks to them who imagined them.* 3. *That the kings of the earth, particularly, would stand up in opposition to the kingdom of Christ, as if they were jealous, (though there is no occasion for their being so) that it would interfere with their powers, and intrench upon their prerogatives. The kings of the earth, that are most favoured and honoured by divine providence, and should do most for God, are strangers and enemies to divine grace, and do most against God.* 4. *That the rulers would gather together against God and Christ; not only monarchs that have the power in their single persons, but there where the power is in many rulers, councils, and senates, they gather together to consult and decree against the Lord, and against his Christ, against both natural and revealed religion. What is done against Christ, God takes as done against himself. Christianity was not only destitute of the advantage of the countenance and support of kings and rulers, it had neither their power nor their purses, but it was opposed and fought against by them, and they combined to run it down, and yet it made its way.*

3. Their representation of the present accomplishment of those predictions in the enmity and malice of the rulers against Christ. What was foretold, we see fulfilled, ver. 27, 28. It is *of a truth*, it is certainly so, it is too plain to be denied, and in it appears *the truth* of the prediction, that Herod and Pilate the two Roman governors, with the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers under their command, and with the *people of Israel* the rulers of the Jews and the mob, that is under their influence, were *gathered together in a confederacy against the holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed*. Some copies add another circumstance, *ἐν τῇ πόλει σὺ ταύτῃ, in this thy holy city*, where above any place he should have been welcomed. But herein they do *that which thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*. See here, 1. *The wise and holy designs* God had concerning Christ. He is here called the *child Jesus*, as he was called, *Luke ii. 27, 43*. in his infancy, to intimate, that even in his exalted state he is not ashamed of his condescensions for us, and that he continues meek and lowly in heart: In the height of his glory he is the *Lamb of God*, and the *child Jesus*. But he is the *holy child Jesus*, so he was called, *Luke i. 35*. *that holy thing*. And thy holy child, the word signifies both a son, and a servant, *παις αὐτοῦ*, he was the *Son of God*; and yet in the work of redemption he acted as his Father's servant, *Isa. xlii. 1*. *My servant whom I uphold*. It was he whom God anointed, both qualified for the undertaking, and called to it; and thence he was called the Lord's Christ, ver. 26. And this comes in as a reason why they set themselves with so much rage and violence against him, because God had *anointed him*, and they were resolved not to resign, much less to submit to him. David was envied by Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed. And the Philistines came up to seek David when they heard he was anointed. 2 *Sam. v. 17*. Now the God that anointed Christ determined what should be done to him pursuant to that anointing; he was anointed to be a saviour, and therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin; he must die therefore, he must be slain, yet not by his own hands, therefore God wisely determined before by what hands it should be done, it must be by the hands of those who will treat him as a criminal and malefactor, and therefore it cannot be done by the hands either of angels or good men; he must therefore be *delivered into the hands of sinners*, as *Jeh was*, chap. xvi. 11. And as David was delivered to Shimei to be *made a curse*, 2 *Sam. xvi. 11*. *the Lord has bidden him*. *God's hand and his counsel determined it*, his will, and his wisdom, God's hand which properly notes his executive power, yet is here put for his purpose and decree, because with him saying and doing are not two things as they are with us. His hand and his counsel always agree, for *whatever the Lord pleased that did he*. Dr. Hammond makes this phrase of God's hand, determining it to be an allusion to the high priest's casting lots upon the two goats on the day of atonement, Lev. xvi. 8. in which he lift up the hand that he happened to have the lot for the Lord, and that goat on which it fell was immediately sacrificed; and the disposal of this lot was from the Lord, *Prov. xvi. 33*. Thus God's hand determined what should be done, that Christ should be the sacrifice slain. Or, (if I may offer a conjecture) when God's hand is here said to determine, it may be meant not of God's acting hand, but his writing hand, as *Jeh xiii. 26*. *The writing hath things against us*; and God's decree is said to be that *which is written in the scriptures of truth*, Dan. x. 31. and in the volume of the book it was *written of Christ*, *Psal. xl. 7*. And it was God's hand that wrote it, his hand according to his counsel. The commission was given under his hand. 2. The wicked and unly instruments that were employed in the executing of this design, though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so. Herod and Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, who had been at variance with each other, united against Christ. And God's bringing us out of Egypt by what they did was no excuse at all for their malice and wickedness in the doing of it, any more than God's making the seed of the martyrs the seed of the church extended the guilt of their bloody persecutors. Sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it, but he is by that

that the more glorified, and will be so, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

4. Their petition with reference to their case at this time: The enemies were gathered together against Christ, and then no wonder they were so against his ministers, *the disciple is not better than his master*, nor must expect better treatment; but, being thus insulted, they pray,

1. That God would take cognizance of the malice of their enemies: *Now, Lord, behold their threatnings*, ver. 29. *behold them*, as thou art said to *behold them* in the psalm before quoted, Psalm ii. 4. when they thought to *break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from them*; *he that sits in heaven laughs at them, and has them in derision*; and then the virgin, the daughter of Zion, may *despise the impotent menaces even of the great king, the king of Assyria*, Isa. xxxvii. 22. And now, Lord; *נא ונב*; there is an emphasis upon the *now*, to intimate, that then is God's time to appear for his people, when the power of their enemies is most daring and threatening: They do not dictate to God what he shall do, but refer themselves to him, like *Hezekiah*, Isa. xxxvii. 17. *Open thy eyes, O Lord, and see*; thou knowest what they say, *thou beholdest mischief and spite*, Psalm x. 14. to thee we appeal, *behold their threatnings*, and either tie their hands, or turn their hearts; make their wrath, as far as it is let loose, to *praise thee*, and the remainder thereof do thou restrain, Psalm lxxvi. 10. It is a comfort to us, that if we are unjustly threatened, and bear it patiently, we may make ourselves easy by spreading the case before the Lord, and leaving it with him.

2. That God, by his grace, would keep up their spirits, and animate them to go on cheerfully in their work: *Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word*, though the priests and rulers have enjoined them silence. Note, In threatening times our care should be not so much that troubles may be prevented, as that we may be enabled to go on with cheerfulness and resolution in our work and duty, whatever troubles we may meet with. Their prayer is not, *Lord, behold their threatnings*, and frighten them, and stop their mouths, and fill their faces with shame; but, *behold their threatnings*, and animate us, open our mouths, and fill our hearts with courage. They do not pray, Lord, give us a fair opportunity to retire from our work, now it is become dangerous, but, Lord, give us grace to go on in our work, and not to be afraid of the face of man. Observe, 1. Those that are sent on God's errands, ought to deliver their message with boldness, with all boldness, with all liberty of speech, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, whoever is offended; not doubting of what they say, or of being borne out in saying it. 2. God is to be sought unto for an ability to speak his word with boldness, and those that desire divine aids and encouragements may depend upon them, and ought to go forth, and go on, in the strength of the Lord God. 3. The threatnings of our enemies, that are designed to weaken our hands, and drive us off from our work, should rather stir us up to so much the more courage and resolution in our work: Are they daring that fight against Christ? for shame let not us be sneaking that are for him!

3. That God would still give them power to work miracles for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached, which, by the cure of the lame man, they found to contribute very much to their success, and would contribute abundantly to their further progress. *Lord, grant us boldness, by stretching forth thine hand to heal*. Note, Nothing emboldens faithful ministers more in their work, than the tokens of God's presence with them, and a divine power going along with them. They pray, 1. That God would stretch forth his hand to heal, both the bodies and souls of men, else in vain do they stretch forth their hands, either in preaching, (Isa. lxxv. 2.) or in curing, Acts vii. 7. 2. That signs and wonders might be done by the name of the holy child Jesus, which would be convincing to the people, and confounding to the enemies. Christ had promised them a power to work miracles, for the proof of their commission, Mark xvi. 17, 18. yet they must pray for it; and, though they had it, must pray for the continuance of it: Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him. Observe, It is the honour of Christ that they aim at in this request, that the wonder might be done by the name of Jesus, the holy child Jesus, and his name shall have all the glory.

Fourthly, The gracious answer God gave to this address, not in word, but in power.

1. God gave them a sign of the acceptance of their prayers, ver. 31. *When they had prayed*, perhaps, many of them prayed successively, one by one, according to the rule, 1 Cor. xiv. 31. and when they had concluded the work of the day, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, there was a strong mighty wind, such as that when the Spirit was poured out upon them, chap. ii. 1. which shook the house, which was now their house of prayer. This shaking of the place was designed to strike an awe upon them, and to awaken and raise their expectations, and to give them a sensible token that God was with them of a truth: And, perhaps, it was to put them in mind of that prophecy, Hag. ii. 7. *I will shake all nations, and will fill this house with glory*. This was to shew them what reason they had to fear God more, and then they would fear man less. He that shook this place, could make the hearts of those who threatened his servants thus to

tremble, for he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. The place was shaken, that their faith might be established and unshaken.

2. God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit, which was the thing they prayed for; their prayer, without doubt, was accepted, for it was answered, they were all filled with the holy Ghost, more than ever, by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness, and not to be afraid of the proud and haughty looks of men: The holy Ghost taught them not only what to speak, but how to speak: Those that were endued habitually with the powers of the holy Ghost, yet had occasion for fresh supplies of the Spirit, according as the various occurrences of their service were: They were filled with the holy Ghost at the bar, ver. 2. and now filled with the holy Ghost in the pulpit; which teaches us, to live in an actual dependence upon the grace of God, according as the duty of every day requires; we need to be anointed with fresh oil, upon every fresh occasion: As in the providence of God, so in the grace of God, we not only in general live, and have our being, but move in every particular action, Acts xvii. 28. We have here an instance of the performance of that promise, that God will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13. for it was in answer to prayer that they were filled with the holy Ghost; and an example of the improvement of that gift, which is required of all on whom it is bestowed; have it and use it, use it and have more of it. When they were filled with the holy Ghost, they spoke the word with all boldness; for the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal: Talents must be traded with, not buried. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, Ita. i. 7.

32. And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed, was his own, but they had all things common. 33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35. And laid them down at the apostles feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37. Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet.

We have a general idea given us in these verses, and it is a very beautiful one, of the spirit and state of this truly primitive church; it is *conspicuum seculi*, a view of that age of infancy and innocence.

First, The disciples loved one another dearly: Behold, how good, and how pleasant it was to see how the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul, ver. 32. and there was no such thing as discord or division among them. Observe here,

1. There were multitudes that believed, even in Jerusalem, where the malignant influence of the chief priests was most strong, there were three thousand converted on one day, and five thousand on another, and, besides those, there were added to the church daily; and, no doubt, they were all baptized, and made profession of the faith, for the same Spirit that endued the apostles with courage to preach the faith of Christ, enlued them with courage to confess it. Note, The increase of the church is the glory of it, and the multitude of them that believe, more than their quality: Now the church shines, and her light is come, when souls thus fly like a cloud into her bosom, and like doves to their windows, Isa. lx. 1, 8.

2. They were all of one heart, and of one soul: Though there were many, very many, of different ages, tempers, and conditions in the world, who, perhaps, before they believed, were perfect strangers to one another, and yet, when they met in Christ, they were as intimately acquainted, as if they had known one another many years: Perhaps, they had been of different sects among the Jews, before their conversion, or had had discords upon civil accounts; but now those were all forgotten, and laid aside, and they were unanimous in the faith of Christ, and, being all joined to the Lord, they were joined to one another in holy love. This was the blessed fruit of Christ's dying precept to his disciples to love one another, and his dying prayer for them that they all might be one. We have reason to think, they divided themselves into several congregations, or worshipping assemblies, according as their dwellings were, under their respective ministers; and yet that occasioned no jealousy or uneasiness; for they were all of one heart, and one soul, notwithstanding; and loved those of other congregations, as truly as those of their own. Thus it was then, and we may not de-

spair of seeing it so again, *when the Spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high.*

Secondly, The ministers went on in their work with great vigour and success, *ver. 33. With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* The doctrine they preached was *the resurrection of Christ*: A matter of fact, which served not only for the confirmation of the truth of Christ's holy religion, but, being duly explained and illustrated, with the proper inferences from it, served for a summary of all the duties, privileges, and comforts of Christians. The resurrection of Christ, rightly understood, and improved, will let us into the great mysteries of religion.

By *the great power*, wherewith *the apostles attested the resurrection*, may be meant,

1. The great vigour, and spirit, and courage, with which they published and avowed this doctrine; they do it not softly and diffidently, but with liveliness and resolution, as those that were themselves abundantly satisfied of the truth of it, and earnestly desired that others should be so too. Or,

2. The miracles which they wrought to confirm their doctrine; with works of *great power*, they gave witness to the resurrection of Christ, God himself, in them, bearing witness too.

Thirdly, The beauty of the Lord our God shone upon them, and all their performances: *Great grace was upon them all*, not only all the apostles, but all the believers, *χρεῖς μεγάλη*; grace that had something great in it, magnificent, and very extraordinary, *was upon them all.*

1. Christ poured out abundance of *grace upon them*, such as qualified them for great services, by enduing them with *great power*; it came upon them from on high, from above.

2. There were evident fruits of this *grace* in all they said and did, such as put an honour upon them, and recommended them to the favour of God, as being in his *sight of great price.*

3. Some think, it includes the favour they were in with the people: Every one saw a beauty and excellency in them, and respected them.

Fourthly, They were very liberal to the poor, and dead to this world. This was as great an evidence of *the grace of God* in them as any other, and recommended them as much to the esteem of the people.

1. They insisted not upon property, which even children seem to have a sense of, and a jealousy for, and which worldly people triumph in, as Laban, *Gen. xxxi. 43. All that thou see'st is mine*; and Nabal, *1 Sam. xxv. 11. My bread, and my water.* These believers were so taken up with the hopes of an inheritance in the other world, that this was as nothing to them: *No man said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own*, *ver. 32.* They did not take away property, but they were indifferent to it: They did not call what they had *their own*, in a way of pride and vain-glory, boasting of it, or trusting in it: They did not call it *their own*, because they had, in affection, *forsoaken all for Christ*, and were continually expecting to be stripped of all for their adherence to him: They did not say, *that ought was their own*; for we can call nothing our own but sin; what we have in the world is more God's than our own, we have it from him, must use it for him, and are accountable for it to him. *No man said what he had was his own*, *ἰδίον*, his peculiar; for he was ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and desired not to eat his morsel alone, but what he had to spare from himself and family, his poor neighbours were welcome to. They that had estates were not solicitous to lay up, but very willing to lay out, and would straiten themselves to help their brethren. No marvel *they were of one heart and soul*, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world; for *meum and tuum* are the great make-baits: Mens holding *their own*, and grasping at more than *their own*, are the rise of wars and fightings.

2. They abounded in charity, so that, in effect, *they had all things common*; for, *ver. 34. there was not any among them that lacked*, but care was taken for their supply: Those that had been maintained upon the publick charity, when they turned Christians, probably, were excluded, and therefore it was fit the church should take care of them: As there were many poor that received the gospel, so there were some rich that were able to maintain them, and *the grace of God* made them willing: Therefore those that gather much have nothing over, because what they have over, they have for them who gather little, that they may have *no lack*, *2 Cor. viii. 14, 15.* The gospel hath laid *all things common*, not so that the poor are allowed to rob the rich, but so as that the rich are appointed to relieve the poor.

3. They did many of them sell their estates to raise a fund for charity: *As many as had possessions of lands or houses, sold them*, *ver. 34.* Dr. Lightfoot computes that this was the year of jubilee in the Jewish nation, the fiftieth year (the twenty eighth since they settled in Canaan an hundred and forty years ago) so that what was sold that year being not to return till the next jubilee, lands then took a good price, and so the sale of those lands would raise the more money.

Now (1.) We are here told what they did with the money that was so raised: *they laid it at the apostles feet*, i. e. they left it to them to be disposed of as they thought fit; probably, they

had their support from it; for whence else could they have it? Observe, *the apostles* would have it laid at their feet, in token of their holy contempt of the wealth of the world; they thought it fitter it should be laid at their feet, than lodged in their hands, or in their bosoms: Being laid there, it was not hoarded up, but distribution was made, by proper persons, unto every man according as he had need: Great care ought to be taken in the distribution of publick charity, 1. That it be given to such as have need, that are not able to procure a competent maintenance for themselves, through age, infancy, sickness, or bodily disability, or incapacity of mind, want either of ingenuity, or activity, cross providences, losses, oppressions, a numerous charge; those that, upon any of these accounts, or any other, have real need, and have not relations of their own to help them; but, above all, those that are reduced to want for well doing, and for *the testimony of a good conscience*, ought to be taken care of, and provided for, and, with a prudent application of what is given, so as may be most for their benefit. 2. That it be given to every man, for whom it is intended, according as he has need, without partiality, or respect of persons. It is a rule in dispensing charity, as well as in administering justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*, that those who are equally needing, and equally deserving, should be equally helped, and that the charity should be suited and adapted to the necessity, as the word is.

(2.) Here is one particular person instanced in, that was remarkable for this generous charity; it was Barnabas, afterwards Paul's colleague. Observe,

1. The account here given concerning him, *ver. 36.* His name was *Joses*, he was of the tribe of Levi, for there were Levites among the Jews of the dispersion, who, it is probable, presided in their synagogue worship, and, according to the duty of that tribe, taught them the good knowledge of the Lord: He was born in Cyprus, a great way off from Jerusalem, his parents, though Jews, having a settlement there. Notice is taken of the apostle's changing his name after he associated with them: It is probable, he was one of the seventy disciples, and as he increased in gifts and graces, grew eminent, and was respected by the apostles, who, in token of their value for him, gave him a name, Barnabas, *the son of prophecy*, so it properly signifies, he being endued with extraordinary gifts of prophecy: But the Hellenist Jews (saith Grotius) called praying, *προεχρησις*, and therefore by that word it is rendered here; *A son of exhortation*, so some; one that had an excellent faculty of healing and persuading; we have an instance of it, *Acts xi. 22, 24. A son of consolation*, so we read it; one that did himself walk very much in the comforts of the holy Ghost, a cheerful Christian, and this enlarged his heart in charity to the poor; or, one that was eminent for comforting the Lord's people, and speaking peace to wounded, troubled consciences; he had an admirable felicity that way. There were two among the apostles that were called, *Boanerges*, sons of thunder, *Mark iii. 17.* but here was a son of consolation with them: Each had their several gift, neither must censure the other, but both ease one another; let the one search the wound, and then let the other heal it, and bind it up.

2. Here is an account of his charity, and great generosity to the publick fund; his is particularly taken notice of, because of the eminency of his services afterwards in the church of God, especially in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles; which, that it might not appear to come from any ill will to his own nation, we have here his benevolence to the Jewish converts; or, perhaps, this is mentioned, because it was a leading card, and an example to others; he having land, whether in Cyprus, where he was born, or in Judea, where he now lived, or elsewhere, is not certain, but he sold it, not to buy elsewhere to advantage, but as a Levite indeed, who knew he had the Lord God of Israel for his inheritance, he despised earthly inheritances, would be cumbered no more with them, but brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet, to be given in charity. Thus, as one that was designed to be a preacher of the gospel, he disentangled himself from the affairs of this life; and he lost nothing upon the balance of the account, by laying the purchase money at the apostles feet, when he himself was, in effect, numbered among the apostles, by that word of the holy Ghost, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them*, *Acts xiii. 2.* Thus, for the respect he shewed to the apostles, as apostles, he had an apostle's reward.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter we have, 1. The sin and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, who, for lying to the holy Ghost, were struck dead at the word of Peter, *ver. 1,—11.* 2. The flourishing state of the church, in the power that went along with the preaching of the gospel, *ver. 12,—16.* 3. The imprisonment of the apostles, and their miraculous discharge out of prison, with fresh orders to go on to preach the gospel, which they did, to the great vexation of their persecutors, *ver. 17,—26.* 4. Their arraignment before the great Sanhedrin, and their justification of themselves in what they did, *ver. 27,—33.* 5. Gamaliel's counsel concerning them, that they should not persecute them, but let them alone and see what would come of it, and their concurrence for the present with this advice, in the dismissal of the apostles with no more but a scourging,

ing, ver. 34,—40. 6. *The apostles cheerful progress in their work, notwithstanding the prohibition laid upon them, and the indignity done them, ver. 41, 42.*

1. **B**UT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2. And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles feet. 3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lye to the holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4. Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lyed unto men, but unto God. 5. And Ananias hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much. 9. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together, to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

The chapter begins with a melancholy *but*, which puts a stop to the pleasant and agreeable prospect of things which we had in the foregoing chapters; as every man, so every church, in its best state has its *but*. 1. The disciples were very holy and heavenly, and seemed to be all exceeding good, but it proved there were hypocrites among them, whose hearts were not right in the sight of God, who, when they were baptized, and took upon them the form of godliness, denied the power of godliness, and stopped short of that: There is a mixture of bad with good, in the best societies on this side heaven; tares will grow among the wheat until the harvest. 2. It was the praise of the disciples that they came up to that perfection which Christ recommended to the rich young man, they sold what they had, and gave to the poor; but even that proved a cloke and cover of hypocrisy, which was thought the greatest proof and evidence of sincerity. 3. The signs and wonders which the apostles wrought, were hitherto miracles of mercy, but now comes in a miracle of judgment; and here is an instance of severity, following the instances of goodness, that God may be both loved and feared. Observe here,

First, The sin of Ananias, and Sapphira his wife. It is good to see husband and wife joining together in that which is good, but to be confederate in evil, is to be like Adam and Eve, when they agreed to eat the forbidden fruit, and were one in their disobedience.

Now their sin was,

1. That they were ambitious of being thought eminent disciples, and of the first rank, when really they were not true disciples; would pass for some of the most fruitful trees in Christ's vineyard, when really the root of the matter was not found in them. They sold a possession, and brought the money, as Barnabas did, to the apostles feet, that they might not seem to be behind the very chief of the believers, but might be applauded, and cried up, and stand so much the fairer for preferment in the church, which, perhaps, they thought would shortly shine in secular pomp and grandeur. Note, It is possible hypocrites may deny themselves in one thing, but then it is to serve themselves in another; may forego their secular advantage in one instance, with a prospect of finding their account in something else. Ananias and Sapphira would take upon them a profession of Christianity, and make a fair shew in the flesh with it, and so would mock God, and deceive others, when they knew they could not go through with the Christian profession. It was commendable, and so far it was right, in that rich young man, that he would not pretend to follow Christ, when, if it should come to a pinch, he knew he could not come up to his terms, but he went away sorrowful: Ananias and Sapphira pretended they could come up to the terms, that they might have the credit of being disciples, when really they could not, and so were a discredit to discipleship. Note, It is often of fatal consequence, for people to go a greater length in profession, than their inward principle will admit of.

2. That they were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God, and his providence. They sold the land, and, perhaps, then, in a pang of zeal, designed no other but to dedicate the whole of the purchase money to pious uses, and made a vow, or, at least, conceived a full purpose to do so; but when

No. C.

the money was received, their heart failed them, and they kept back part of the price, ver. 2. because they loved the money, and thought it was too much to part with at once, and to trust in the apostles hands, and because they knew not but they might want it themselves; and though now all things were common, yet it would not be so long; and what should they do in a time of need, if they should leave themselves nothing to take to? They could not take God's word that they should be provided for, but thought they would play a wiser part than the rest had done, and lay up for a rainy day. Thus they thought to serve both God and mammon; God, by bringing part of the money to the apostles feet; and mammon, by keeping the other part in their own pocket; as if there were not an all-sufficiency in God to make up the whole to them, except they retained some in their own hands, by way of caution money: Their hearts were divided, so were they found faulty, Hof. x. 2. They halted between two; if they had been through-paced worldlings, they would not have sold their possession; and if they had been through-paced Christians, they would not have detained part of the price.

3. That they thought to deceive the apostles, and make them believe they brought the whole purchase money, when really it was but a part. They came with as good an assurance, and as great a shew of piety and devotion, as any of them, and laid the money at the apostles feet, as if it were their all. They dissembled with God, and his Spirit, with Christ, and his church, and ministers; and this was their sin.

Secondly, The indictment of Ananias, which proved both his condemnation and execution for this sin. When he brought the money, and expected to be commended and encouraged, as others were, Peter took him to task about it. He, without any enquiry, or examination of witnesses concerning it, charges him peremptorily with the crime, and aggravates it, and lays load upon him for it, shewing it him in its own colour, ver. 3, 4. The Spirit of God, in Peter, not only discovered the fact without any information, when, perhaps, no man in the world knew it, but the man and his wife themselves, but likewise discerned the principle of reigning infidelity in the heart of Ananias, which was at the bottom of it, and therefore proceeded against him so suddenly. Had it been a sin of infirmity, through the surprize of a temptation, Peter would have taken Ananias aside, and have bid him go home, and fetch the rest of the money, and repent of his folly in attempting to put this cheat upon them; but he knew that his heart was fully set in him to do this evil, and therefore allowed him not space to repent him: He here shewed him,

1. The original of his sin: Satan filled his heart; he not only suggested it to him, and put it into his head, but he hurried him on with resolution to do it. Whatever is contrary to the good Spirit, proceeds from the evil spirit; and those hearts are filled by Satan, in which worldliness reigns, and has the ascendant. Some think, Ananias was one of those that had received the holy Ghost, and was filled with his gifts, but having provoked the Spirit to withdraw from him, now Satan filled his heart: As when the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, an evil spirit from God troubled him. Satan is a lying spirit, he was so in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, and so he was in the mouth of Ananias, and by that made it appear that he filled his heart.

2. The sin itself: He lyed to the holy Ghost; a sin of such an heinous nature, that he could not have been guilty of it, if Satan had not filled his heart. The phrase which we render lying to the holy Ghost, is *ψεύσατο στὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*, which some read, to bely the holy Ghost; which may be taken two ways: 1. That he belyed the holy Ghost in himself, so Dr. Lightfoot takes it, and supposeth, that Ananias was not an ordinary believer, but a minister, and one that had received the gift of the holy Ghost with the hundred and twenty (for mention is made of him immediately after Barnabas) yet he durst thus, by dissembling, bely and shame that gift. Or thus, They who had sold their estates, and laid the money at the apostles feet, did it by the special impulse of the holy Ghost, enabling them to do an act so very great and generous; and Ananias pretended that he was moved by the holy Ghost to do what he did, as others were; whereas it appeared, by his baseness, that he was not under the influence of the good Spirit at all; for had it been his work, it would have been perfect. 2. That he belyed the holy Ghost in the apostles, to whom he brought the money; he misrepresented the Spirit they were acted by, either by a suspicion that they would not faithfully distribute what they were intrusted with, which was a base suggestion, as if they were false to the trust reposed in them, or, by an assurance that they could not discover the fraud: He belyed the holy Ghost, when, by what he did, he would have it thought, that those who are endued with the gifts of the holy Ghost, might as easily be imposed upon as other men, like Gehazi, whom his master convicted of his error by that word, Went not mine heart with thee? 2 Kings v. 26. It is charged upon the house of Israel and Judah, when, like Ananias here, they dealt very treacherously, that they belyed the Lord, saying, It is not he, Jer. v. 11, 12. Thus Ananias thought the apostles were altogether such as himself, and this was belying the holy Ghost in them, as if he were not in them a discernor of spirits, whereas they had all the gifts of the Spirit in them, which, to others, were divided severally: See 1 Cor. xii. 8, 10. They that pretend to an inspira-

tion of the Spirit, in imposing upon the church their own fancies, either in opinion or practice, that say, they are moved from above, when they are carried on by their pride, covetousness, or affectation of dominion, *bely the holy Ghost*.

But we read it, *to lye unto the holy Ghost*; which reading is countenanced by *ver. 4. Thou hast not lyed unto men, but unto God*. 1. Ananias told a lye, a deliberate lye, and with a purpose to deceive; he told Peter he had sold a possession, house or lands, and this was the purchase money. Perhaps, he expressed himself in words that were capable of a double meaning, used some equivocations about it, which he thought might palliate the matter a little, and save him from the guilt of a downright lye; or, perhaps, he said nothing; but it was all one, he did as the rest did, who brought the whole price, and would be thought to do so, and expected the praise they had that did so, and the same privilege and access to the common stock as they had; and therefore it was an implicit protestation that he brought the whole price, as they did; and this was a lye, for he kept back part. Note, Many are brought to gross lying by reigning pride, and affectation of the applause of men; particularly in works of charity to the poor. That therefore we may not be found boasting of a false gift given to us, or given by us, *Prov. xxv. 14. we must not boast even of a true gift*; which is the meaning of our Saviour's caution in works of charity, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth*. Those that brag of good works they never did, or promise good works they never do, or make the good works they do more or better than really they are, come under the guilt of Ananias's lye; which it concerns us all to dread the thought of. 2. He told this lye to the holy Ghost: It was not so much to the apostles, as to the holy Ghost in them, that the money was brought; and that was said, which was said, *ver. 4. Thou hast not lyed unto men, not to men only, not to men chiefly, though the apostles be but men, but thou hast lyed unto God*: From hence it is justly inferred, that the holy Ghost is God; for he that lyeth to the holy Ghost, lyeth to God. "They that had to the apostles, acted, and acting by the Spirit of God, are said to lye to God, because the apostles acted by the power and authority of God: From whence it follows, (as Dr. Whitby well observes) that the power and authority of the Spirit, must be the power and authority of God." And, as he further argues, "Ananias is said to lye to God, because he lyed to that Spirit in the apostles, which enabled them to discern the secrets of mens hearts and actions, which, being the property of God alone, he that lyes to him, must therefore lye to God, because he lies to one who has the incommunicable property of God, and, consequently, the divine essence."

3. The aggravations of the sin, *ver. 4. Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* which may be understood two ways: 1. Thou wast under no temptation to keep back part of the price; before it was sold, it was thy own, and not mortgaged, nor encumbered, or any way engaged for debt; and when it was sold, it was in thy own power to dispose of the money at thy pleasure; so that thou mightest as well have brought the whole as a part: Thou hadst no debts to pay, perhaps, no children to provide for; so that thou wast not under the influence of any particular inducement to keep back part of the price: Thou wast a transgressor without a cause: Or, 2. Thou wast under no necessity of selling thy land at all, or bringing any of the money to the apostles feet: Thou mightest have kept the money if thou hadst pleased, and the land too, and never have pretended to this piece of perfection. This rule of charity the apostle gives, that people be not pressed, and that it be not urged as of necessity, because God loves a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7. and Philemon must do a good work, not as it were of necessity, but willingly, Philemon 14. As better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay; so better had it been for him not to have sold his land at all, than thus to keep back part of the price; not to have pretended to do the good work, than thus to do it by the halves: When it was sold, it was in thine own power, but it was not so when it was vowed, thou hadst then opened thy mouth to the Lord, and couldst not go back. Thus, in giving our hearts to God, we are not admitted to divide them: Satan, like the mother, who when the child was new, would take up with a half, but God will have all or none.

4. All this guilt, thus aggravated, is charged upon him: *Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?* Observe, Though Satan filled his heart to do it, yet he is said to have conceived it in his own heart; which shews, that we cannot extenuate our sins, by laying the fault of them upon the devil; he tempts, but he cannot force; it is of our own hearts that we are drawn away, and enticed: The ill thing, whatever it is, that is said or done, the sinner has conceived it in his own heart; and therefore, if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. The close of the charge is very high, but very just: *Thou hast not lyed unto men, but unto God*. What emphasis doth the prophet lay upon that of Ahaz; *not wearing men only, but wearing my God also*! Isa. vii. 13. And Mo'es upon that of Israel; *your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord*! Exod. xvi. 8. So here, thou mightest have imposed upon us, who are men like thy self, but, be not deceived, God is not mocked; if we think to put a cheat upon God, we shall prove in the end to have put a fatal cheat upon our own souls.

Thirdly, The death and burial of Ananias, *ver. 5, 6*.

1. He died upon the spot. Ananias hearing these words, was speechless, in the same sense that he was, who was charged with intruding into the wedding feast without a wedding garment, he had nothing to say for himself; but that was not all, he was struck speechless with a witness, for he was struck dead; he fell down and gave up the ghost. It doth not appear whether Peter designed and expected that this would follow upon what he said to him, it is likely he did, for to Sapphira his wife Peter particularly spoke death, *ver. 9*. Some think, an angel struck him, that he died, as Herod, *Acts xii. 23*. Or, his own conscience smote him with such horror and amazement at the sense of his guilt, that he sunk and died away under the load of it: And, perhaps, when he was convicted of lying to the holy Ghost, he remembered the unpardonableness of the blasphemy against the holy Ghost, which struck him like a dagger to the heart. See the power of the word of God in the mouth of the apostles! As it was to some a favour of life unto life, so it was to others a favour of death unto death: As there are those whom the gospel justifies, so there are those whom it condemns.

This punishment of Ananias may seem severe, but we are sure it was just. 1. It was designed to maintain the honour of the holy Ghost, as now lately poured out upon the apostles, in order to the setting up of the gospel kingdom: It was a great affront which Ananias put upon the holy Ghost, as if he could be moved upon; and it had a direct tendency to invalidate the apostles testimony; for if they could not by the Spirit discover this first, how could they by this Spirit discover the deep things of God, which were to reveal to the children of men? It was therefore necessary, that credit of the apostles gifts and powers should be supported, and that was at this expence. 2. It was designed to deter others from like presumptions, now at the beginning of this dispensation. Ananias afterwards was not thus punished, nor Eliphas, but Ananias was made an example now at first, that, with the terrible proofs given what a comfortable thing it is to receive the Spirit, there might be also sensible proofs given what a dangerous thing it is to resist the Spirit, and do despite to him. How severely was the worshipping of the golden calf punished, and the gathering of sticks on the sabbath day, when the laws of the second and fourth commandment were now newly given! So was the offering of strange fire by Nadab and Abihu, and the mutiny of Korah and his company, when the fire from heaven was now newly given, and the authority of Moses and Aaron now newly established.

The doing of this by the ministry of Peter, who himself with a lye denied his Master but a while ago, intimates, that it was not the resentment of a wrong done to himself, for then he, who had himself been faulty, would have had charity for them that offended; and he, who himself had repented, and been forgiven, would have forgiven this affront, and endeavoured to bring this offender to repentance; but it was the act of the Spirit of God in Peter, to him the indignity was done, and by him the punishment was inflicted.

2. He was buried presently, for that was the manner of the Jews, *ver. 6*. The young men, that, it is probable, were appointed to that office in the church of burying the dead, as among the Romans the *libertini* and *pollinctores*; or, the young men that attended the apostles, and waited on them, they wound up the dead body in grave clothes, carried it out of the city, and buried it decently, though he died in sin, and by an immediate stroke of divine vengeance.

Fourthly, The reckoning with Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, who, perhaps, was first in the transgression, and tempted her husband to eat this forbidden fruit. She came in to the place where the apostles were, which, as it should seem, was Solomon's porch, for there we find them, *ver. 12*. a part of the temple where Christ used to walk, *John x. 23*. She came in about three hours after, expecting to share in the thanks of the house, for her coming in and consenting to the sale of the land, of which, perhaps, she was entitled to her dower, or thirds; for she knew not what was done. It was strange no body ran to tell her of the sudden death of her husband, that she might keep away; perhaps, they did, and she was not at home; and so when she came to present herself before the apostles as a benefactor to the fund, she met with a breach instead of a blessing.

1. She was found guilty of sharing with her husband in his sin, by a question that Peter asked her, *ver. 8. Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?* naming the sum which Ananias had brought and laid at the apostles feet: Was that all you received for the sale of the land, and had you no more for it? No, saith she, we had no more, but that was every farthing we received. Ananias and his wife agreed to tell the same story, and the bargain being private, and, by consent, kept to themselves, no body could disprove them, and therefore they thought they might safely stand in the lye, and should gain credit to it. It is sad to see those relations who should quicken one another to that which is good, harden one another in that which is evil.

2. Sentence is past upon her, that she should partake in her husband's doom, *ver. 9*.

(1.) Her sin is opened ; *How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord ?* Before he passeth sentence, he makes her to know her abominations, and shews her the evil of her sin.

1. That they *tempted the Spirit of the Lord* ; as Israel tempted God in the desert, when they said, *Is the Lord among us ? Or is he not ?* after they had seen so many miraculous proofs of his power, and not only his presence, but his presidency, when they said, *Can God furnish a table ?* so here, Can the Spirit in the apostles discover this fraud ? Can they discern that this is but a *part of the price*, when we tell them *it is the whole ? Can he judge through this dark cloud ?* Job xxii. 13. They saw they had the gift of tongues, but had they the gift of *discerning spirits* ? Those that presume upon security and impunity in sin, tempt the Spirit of God, they tempt God as if he were altogether such an one as themselves.

2. That they *agreed together* to do it ; making the bond of their relation to each other, which by the divine institution is a sacred tie, to become a bond of iniquity. It is hard to say which is worse between yoke-fellows and other relations, a discord in good, or concord in evil. It seems to intimate, that their *agreeing together* to do it was a further *tempting of the Spirit* ; as if when they had engaged to keep one another's counsel in this matter, even the Spirit of the Lord himself could not discover them. Thus they *digged deep to hide their counsel from the Lord* ; but were made to know *it is in vain*. *How is it that ye are thus infatuated ?* What strange stupidity has seized you, that you would venture to make trial of that which is past dispute ? How is it that you who are baptized Christians, do not understand yourselves better ? How durst you run so great a risque ?

(2.) Her doom is read ; *Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door*, perhaps he heard them coming, or knew that they could not be long ; and they shall *carry thee out*. As Adam and Eve who agreed to eat the forbidden fruit, were turned together out of paradise ; so Ananias and Sapphira, who agreed to *tempt the Spirit of the Lord*, were together *chased out of the world*.

3. The sentence *executed itself* ; there needed no executioner, a killing power went along with Peter's word, as sometimes a healing power did ; for the God in whose name he spoke, *kills and makes alive* ; and *out of his mouth* (and Peter was now his mouth) *both evil and good proceed*, ver. 10. *Then fell she down straightway at his feet*. Some sinners God makes quick work with, while others he bears long with ; for which difference doubtless there are good reasons : but he is not accountable to us for them. She heard not till now that her husband was dead, the notice of which, with the discovery of her sin, and the the sentence of death passed upon her, struck her as a thunderbolt, and took her away *as with a whirlwind*. And many instances there are of sudden deaths, which are not to be looked upon as the punishment of some gross sin like this here ; we must not think that all who *die suddenly* are sinners above others ; perhaps it is in favour to them, that they have a quick passage, however, it is forewarning to all to be always ready : But here it is plain it was in judgment. Some put the question concerning the eternal state of Ananias and Sapphira, and incline to think, that the *destruction of the flesh*, was that the *spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus* : And I should go in with that charitable opinion, if there had been any space given them to repent, as there was to that incestuous Corinthian : But secret things belong not to us. It is said, she fell down at Peter's feet ; there where she should have laid the whole price, and did not, she was herself laid, as it were to make up the deficiency. The *young men* that had the care of funerals, coming in, *found her dead*, and it is not said, they *wound her up*, as they did Ananias, but they *carried her out* as she was, and *buried her by her husband* ; and, probably, an inscription was set over their graves, intimating that they were joint monuments of divine wrath against those that lye to the holy Ghost. Some ask, whether the apostles kept the money which they did bring, and concerning which they lyed. I am apt to think they did ; they had not the superstition of those who said, *It is not lawful for us to put it into the treasury ; for unto the pure, all things are pure*. What they brought was not polluted to them that they brought it to ; but what they kept back, was polluted to them that kept it back. Use was made of the censers of Korah's mutineers.

Fifthly, The impression that this made upon the people ; notice is taken of this in the midst of the story, ver. 5. *Great fear came upon all that heard these things* ; that *heard* what Peter said, and saw what followed ; or, upon all that heard the story of it ; for, no doubt, it was all the talk of the city. And again, ver. 11. *Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*.

1. They that had joined themselves *to the church* were hereby struck with an awe of God, and of his judgment, and with a greater veneration of this dispensation of the Spirit they were now under. It was not a damp or check to their holy joy, but it taught them to be serious in it, and to rejoice with trembling. All that laid their money at the apostles feet after this, were afraid of keeping back any *part of the price*.

2. All that heard it were put into a consternation by it, and were ready to say, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God*, and his Spirit in the apostles ? As 1 Sam. vi. 20.

12. ¶ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people ; (and they were all with one accord in Solomons porch. 13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them : but the people magnified them. 14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women) 15. Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them. 16. There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits : and they were healed every one.

We have here an account of the progress of the gospel, notwithstanding this terrible judgment inflicted upon two hypocrites.

1. Here is a general account of the miracles which the apostles wrought, ver. 12. *By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people* ; many miracles of mercy, for one of judgment. Now the gospel power returned to its proper channel, which is that of mercy and grace. God had come out of his place to punish, but now returns to his place, to his mercy-seat again. The miracles they wrought proved their divine mission ; they were not a few but many, of diverse kinds, and oft repeated ; they were signs and wonders, such wonders as were confessedly signs of a divine presence and power ; they were not done in a corner, but *among the people*, who were at liberty to enquire into them, and if there had been any fraud or collusion in them would have discovered it.

1. We are here told what are the effects of these miracles which the apostles wrought.

First, The church was hereby kept together, and confirmed in their adherence both to the apostles, and to one another. *They of the church were all with one accord in Solomon's porch*.

1. They met in the temple, in the open place that was called *Solomon's porch*. It was strange the rulers of the temple suffered them to keep their meeting there : But God inclined their hearts to tolerate them there a while, for the more convenient spreading of the gospel ; and they who permitted buyers and sellers, could not for shame prohibit such preachers and healers there. They all met in public worship ; so early is the institution of religious assemblies observed in the church, which must by no means be forsaken or let fall, for in them a profession of religion is kept up.

2. They were there *with one accord*, unanimous in their doctrine, worship and discipline ; and there was no discontent or murmuring about the death of Ananias and Sapphira, as there was against Moses and Aaron, about the death of Korah and his company, *ye have killed the people of the Lord*, Num. xvi. 41. The separation of hypocrites by distinguishing judgments should make the sincere cleave so much the closer to each other, and to the gospel ministry.

Secondly, It gained the apostles very *great respect*, who were the prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom.

1. The other ministers kept their distance ; *of the rest of their company, durst no man join himself to them*, as their equal, or an associate with them ; though others of them were endued with the holy Ghost and *spoke with tongues*, yet none of them at this time did such *signs and wonders* as the apostles did ; and therefore they acknowledged their superiority, and in every thing yielded to them.

2. All *the people magnified them*, and had them in great veneration ; spoke of them with respect, and represented them as the favourites of heaven, and unspeakable blessings to this earth. Though the chief priests vilified them, and did all they could to make them contemptible, that did not hinder the people from magnifying them, who saw the thing in a true light. Observe, The apostles were far from *magnifying themselves*, they transmitted the glory of all they did very carefully and faithfully to Christ, and yet the people *magnified them* ; for they that humble themselves shall be exalted, and those honoured that honour God only.

Thirdly, The church increased in number, ver. 14. *Believers were the more added to the Lord*, and no doubt joined themselves to the church, when they saw that God was in it of a truth, even *multitudes both of men and women*. They were so far from being deterred by the example that was made of Ananias and Sapphira, that they were rather *invited* by it into a society that kept such a strict discipline. Observe,

1. *Believers are added to the Lord Jesus*, joined to him, and so joined to his mystical body, from which nothing can separate us and cut us off, but that which separates us and cuts us off from Christ. Many have been brought *to the Lord*, and yet *there is room* for others to be *added to him*, added to the number of those that are united to him ; and additions will still be in the making till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the number of the elect accomplished.

2. Notice is taken of the conversion of women as well as men ; more notice than generally was in the Jewish church, in which they

they neither received the sign of circumcision, nor were obliged to attend the solemn feasts; and the *court of the women* was one of the *outer courts* of the temple. But, as among those that followed Christ while he was upon earth, so among those that believed on him after he went to heaven, great notice was taken of the good women.

Fourthly, The apostles had abundance of patients, and gained abundance of reputation both to them and their doctrine, by the cure of them all, *ver. 15, 16.* so many *signs and wonders* were wrought by the apostles, that all manner of people put in for the benefit of them, both in city and country, and had it.

1. In the city: they brought forth their sick into the streets, for it is probable the priests would not suffer them to bring them into the temple to Solomon's porch, and the apostles had not leisure to come to the houses of them all. And they laid them on beds and couches, because they were so weak that they could neither go nor stand, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them, though it could not reach them all; and, it should seem, it had the desired effect, as the woman's touch of the hem of Christ's garment had; and in this among other things that word of Christ was fulfilled, *greater works than these shall ye do.* God expresses his care of his people, by his being their shade on their right hand; and the benign influences of Christ as a king, are compared to the shadow of a great rock. Peter comes between them and the sun, and so heals them, cuts them off from a dependence upon creature-sufficiency as insufficient, that they may expect help only from that Spirit of grace with whom he was filled. And if such miracles were wrought by Peter's shadow, we have reason to think they were so by the other apostles, as by the handkerchiefs from Paul's body, *Acts xix. 12.* no doubt both being with an actual intention in the minds of the apostles thus to heal; so that it is absurd hence to infer a healing virtue in the relicks of saints that are dead and gone, we read not of any cured by the relicks of Christ himself, after he was gone, as certainly we should, if there had been any such thing.

2. In the country towns; multitudes came to Jerusalem from the cities round about, bringing sick folks that were afflicted in body, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits, that were troubled in mind, and they were healed every one, distempered bodies, and distempered minds were set to rights. Thus opportunity was given to the apostles, both to convince peoples judgments by these miracles, of the heavenly original of the doctrine they preached; and also to engage peoples affections both to them and it, by giving them a specimen of its beneficial tendency to the welfare of this lower world.

17. ¶ Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and were filled with indignation, 18. And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people, all the words of this life. 21. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23. Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24. Now when the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison, are standing in the temple and teaching the people.

Never did any good work go on with any hope of success, but it met with opposition; they that are bent to do mischief, cannot be reconciled to them who make it their business to do good. Satan, the destroyer of mankind, ever was, and will be an adversary to those who are the benefactors of mankind; and it would have been strange, if the apostles had gone on thus teaching and healing, and had had no check. In these verses we have the malice of hell, and the grace of heaven struggling about them; the one to drive them off from this good work, the other to animate them in it.

First, The priests were enraged at them, and clapt them up in prison, *ver. 17, 18.* Observe,

1. Who their enemies and persecutors were. The high priest was the ringleader, Annas or Caiaphas, who saw their wealth and dignity, their power and tyranny, that is, their *All* at stake, and inevitably lost, if the spiritual and heavenly doctrine of Christ get ground and prevail among the people. Those that were most forward to join with the high priest herein, were the *sect of the Sad-*

ducees, who had a particular enmity to the gospel of Christ, because it confirmed and established the doctrine of the invisible world, the resurrection of the dead, and the future state, which they denied. It is not strange if men of *no religion* be bigotted in their opposition to true and pure religion.

2. How they were affected towards them; ill affected, and exasperated to the last degree; when they heard and saw what flocking there was to the apostles, and how considerable they were become, they rose up in a passion, as men that could no longer bear it, and were resolved to make head against it, being filled with indignation at the apostles for preaching the doctrine of Christ, and curing the sick; and at the people for hearing them and bringing the sick to them to be cured; and at themselves and their own party, for suffering this matter to go so far, and not knocking it off the head at first. Thus are the enemies of Christ and his gospel a torment to themselves. *Envy slays the silly one.*

3. How they proceeded against them, *ver. 18.* They laid their hands, perhaps their own hands, so low did their malice make them stoop, or rather, the hands, of their officers, and put them in the common prison, among the worst of malefactors. Hereby they designed, 1. To put a restraint upon them; though they could not lay any thing criminal to their charge, worthy of death or of bonds, yet while they had them in prison, they kept them from going on in their work, and that they reckoned a good point gained. Thus early were the ambassadors of Christ in bonds. 2. To put a terror upon them, and so to drive them off from their work; the last time they had them before them they had only threatened them, *chap. iv. 21.* but now finding that did not do, they imprisoned them, to make them afraid of them. 3. To put a disgrace upon them, and therefore they chose to clap them up in the common prison, that being thus vilified, the people might not, as they had done, magnify them. Satan hath carried on his design against the gospel very much, by making the preachers and professors of it despicable.

Secondly, God sent his angel to release them out of prison, and to renew their commission to preach the gospel; the powers of darkness fight against them, but the Father of lights fights for them, and sends an angel of light to plead their cause. The Lord will never desert his witnesses, his advocates, but will certainly stand by them, and bear them out.

1. The apostles are discharged, legally discharged from their imprisonment, *ver. 19.* The angel of the Lord by night, in spite of all the locks and bars that were upon them, opened the prison doors, and in spite of all the vigilance and resolution of the keepers that stood without before the doors, brought forth the prisoners, (*See ver. 12.*) gave them authority to go out, without crime, and led them through all opposition. This deliverance is not so particularly related, as that of Peter, *chap. xii. 7, &c.* but the miracle here, was the very same with that there. Note, There is no prison so dark, so strong, but God can both visit his people in it, and, if he pleaseth, fetch them out of it. This discharge of the apostles out of prison by an angel, was a resemblance of Christ's resurrection and his discharge out of the prison of the grave, and would help to confirm the apostles preaching of it.

2. They are charged, and legally charged to go on with their work, so as thereby to be discharged from the prohibition which the high priest laid them under; the angel bid them, *Go, stand, and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life*, *ver. 10.* When they were miraculously set at liberty, they must not think it was that they might save their lives by making their escape out of the hands of their enemies. No; it was that they might go on with their work, with so much the more boldness. Recoveries from sickness, releases out of trouble, are granted us, and are to be looked upon by us as granted, not that we may enjoy the comforts of our life, but that God may be honoured with the services of our life. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, *Psal. cxix. 175.* *Bring my soul out of prison*, as the apostles here, *that I may praise thy name*, *Psal. cxlii. 7.* See *Isa. xxxviii. 22.*

Now in this charge given them, Observe, 1. Where they must preach; *speak in the temple.* One would think, though they might not quit their work, yet it had been prudence to go on with it in a more private place, where it would give less offence to the priests than in the temple, and so would the less expose them. No; *speak in the temple*, for that is the place of concourse, that is your Father's house, and is not to be as yet quite left desolate. It is not for the preachers of Christ's gospel to retire into corners as long as they can have any opportunity of preaching in the great congregation. 2. To whom they must preach; *speak to the people.* Not to the princes and rulers, for they will not hearken; but to the people who are willing and desirous to be taught, and whose souls are as precious to Christ, and ought to be so to you, as the souls of the greatest. *Speak to the people*, to all in general, for all are concerned. 3. How they must preach; *Go, stand and speak:* Which intimates, not only that they must speak publicly, stand up and speak, that all may hear; but they must speak boldly and resolutely, stand and speak; that is, speak it as those that resolve to stand to it, to live and die by it. 4. What they must speak; *All the words of this life.* This life which you have been speaking of among yourselves; referring, perhaps, to the conferences concerning heaven, which they had among themselves for their own and

one another's encouragement in prison ; Go, and preach the same to the world, that others may be comforted with the same comforts with which you yourselves are comforted of God. Or, of *this life* which the Sadducees deny, and therefore persecute you ; preach that, though you know that is it they have indignation at. Or, of this life emphatically ; this heavenly, divine life, in comparison with which, the present earthly life doth not deserve the name. Or, *these words of life* the very same you have preached, these words which the holy Ghost puts into your mouth. Note, The words of the gospel, are the words of life ; quickening words ; they are spirit, and they are life ; *words whereby we may be saved* ; that is the same with this here, *Acts xi. 24.* The gospel is the word of this life, for it secures to us the privileges of our way, as well as those of our home ; and the promises of the life that now is, as well as of that to come. And yet even the spiritual and eternal life are brought so much to light in the gospel, that they may be called *this life* ; for the word is nigh thee. Note, The gospel is concerning matters of *life and death*, and ministers must preach it, and people hear it accordingly. They must speak *All* the words of this life, and not conceal any for fear of offending, or in hope of ingratiating themselves with their rulers. Christ's witnesses are sworn to speak *the whole truth*.

Thirdly, They went on with their work, *ver. 21.* *When they heard that* ; when they heard that it was the will of God they should continue to preach in the temple, they returned to Solomon's porch there, *ver. 21.* 1. It was a great satisfaction to them to have these fresh orders. Perhaps they began to question whether, if they had their liberty, they should preach as publickly *in the temple* as they had done, because they had been bid, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another. But now the angel ordered them to go preach *in the temple* ; their way was plain, and they ventured without any difficulty, *entered into the temple*, and feared not the face of man. Note, If we may but be satisfied concerning our duty, our business is to keep close to that, and then we may cheerfully trust God with our safety.

2. They set themselves presently to execute them without dispute or delay. They *entered into the temple early in the morning*, as soon as the gates were opened, and people began to come together there, and taught them the gospel of the kingdom ; and did not at all fear what man could do unto them. The case here was extraordinary, the whole treasure of the gospel is lodged in their hands ; if they be silent now, the springs are shut up, and the whole work falls to the ground, and is made to cease ; which is not the case of ordinary ministers, who therefore are not by this example bound to throw themselves into the mouth of danger ; and yet when God gives opportunity of doing good, though we be under the restraint and terror of human powers, we should venture far, rather than let go such an opportunity.

Fourthly, The high priest and his party, went on with their prosecution, *ver. 21.* They supposing they had the apostles sure enough, *called the council together*, a great and extraordinary council, for they summoned *all the senate of the children of Israel*. See here,

1. How they were prepared, and how big with expectation to crush the gospel of Christ and the preachers of it, for they raised the whole *Posse*. The last time they had the apostles in custody, they convened them only before a committee of those that were *of the kindred of the high priest*, who were obliged to act cautiously, but now that they might proceed further and with more assurance, they called together, *πᾶσαν τὴν γερουσίαν*, *all the eldership*, that is, saith Dr. Lightfoot, all the three courts or benches of judges in Jerusalem, not only the great Sanhedrin consisting of seventy elders, but the other two judicatories that were erected one in the outer court gate of the temple, the other in the inner or Beautiful gate, consisting of twenty three judges each. So that if there were a full appearance, here were one hundred and sixteen judges : Thus God ordered it, that the confusion of the enemies might be more publick, and the apostles testimony against them, and that those might hear the gospel who would not hear it otherwise than from the bar : Howbeit, the high priest meant not so, neither did his heart think so ; but it was in his heart to rally all his forces against the apostles, and by a universal consent to cut them all off at once.

2. How they were balked, and had their faces filled with shame ; *He that sits in heaven laughs at them*, and so may we too, to see how gravely the court is set ; and we may suppose the high priest makes a solemn speech to them, setting forth the occasion of their coming together ; that a very dangerous faction was now lately raised in Jerusalem, by the preaching of the doctrine of Jesus, which it was needful for the preservation of their church (which never was in such danger as now) speedily and effectually to suppress ; that it was now in the power of their hands to do it, for he had the ringleaders of the faction now in the common prison, to be proceeded against, if they would but agree to it, with the utmost severity. An officer is, in order hereunto, dispatched immediately to fetch the prisoners to the bar : But see how they are baffled ;

1. The officers come and tell them, that they are *not to be found in the prison*, *ver. 22, 23.* The last time they were forthcoming when they were called for, *chap. iv. 7.* But now they were gone ; and the report which the officers make, is, *The prison doors truly found we shut with all safety*, nothing had been done to

weaken them ; *the keepers* had not been wanting to their duty, we found them ; *standing without before the doors*, and knowing nothing to the contrary, but that the prisoners were all safe : but when we went in *we found no man therein*, i. e. none of the men we were sent to fetch : But it is likely the common prisoners they found there. Which way the angel fetched them out, whether by some backway, or opening the door, and fastening it close again, the keepers all the while asleep, we are not told, however it was, they were gone. The Lord knows, though we do not, how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to *loose* those that are in bonds for his name's sake, and he will do it, as here, when he has occasion for them.

Now think how blank the court looked when the officers made this return upon their order, *ver. 24.* *When the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard those things*, they were all at a plunge, and looked one upon another *doubting what this thing should be*. They were extremely perplexed, were at their wits-end, having never been so disappointed in all their lives, of a thing they were so sure of. It occasioned various speculations ; some suggesting that they were conjured out of the prison, and made their escape by magick arts ; others, that the keepers had played tricks with them, not knowing how many friends these prisoners had that were so much the darlings of the people. Some feared that having made such a wonderful escape, they would be the more followed ; others, that though perhaps they had frightened them from Jerusalem, they should hear of them again in some part or other of the country, where they would do yet more mischief, and it would be yet more out of their power to stop the spreading of the infection ; and now they begin to fear, that instead of curing the ill, they have made it worse. Note, Those often distress and embarrass themselves that think to distress and embarrass the cause of Christ.

2. Their doubt is in part determined ; and yet their vexation is increased by another messenger, who brings them word, that their prisoners are preaching *in the temple*, *ver. 25.* *Behold, the men whom ye put in prison*, and have sent for to your bar, are now hard by you here, *standing in the temple*, under your nose and in defiance of you, *teaching the people*. Prisoners that have broke prison use to abscond, for fear of being retaken : But these prisoners that here made their escape, dare to shew their faces even there where their persecutors have the greatest influence. Now this confounded them more than any thing. Common malefactors may have art enough to break prison, but they are uncommon ones that have courage enough to avow it when they have done.

26. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence : (for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned) 27. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council : and the high priest asked them, 28. Saying, D'd not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this name ? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29. ¶ Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than man. 30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32. And we are his witnesses of these things ; and so is also the holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33. ¶ When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. 34. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space, 35. And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36. For before these days rose up Theudas boasting himself to be some body, to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joyned themselves : who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him : he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought : 39. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40. And to him they agreed : and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41. ¶ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42.

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

We are not told what it was that the apostles preached to the people ; no doubt it was according to the direction of the angel, *the words of this life* ; but what passed between them and the council, we have here an account of ; for in their sufferings there appeared more of a divine power and energy, than even in their preaching. Now here we have,

First, The seizing of the apostles a second time. We may think, if God designed this, why were they rescued from their first imprisonment ? But that was designed to humble the pride, and check the fury of their persecutors ; and now he would shew that they were discharged ; not because they feared a trial, for they were ready to surrender themselves, and make their appearance before the greatest of their enemies.

1. They brought them without violence, with all the respect and tenderness that could be ; did not pull them out of the pulpit, not bind them, or drag them along, but spoke them fair. And one would think they had reason to do so in reverence to the temple, that holy place, and for fear of the apostles, lest they should strike them as they did Ananias, or call for fire from heaven upon them as Elias did ; but all that restrained their violence, was their *fear of the people*, who had such a veneration for the apostles that they would stone them, if they offered them any abuse.

2. Yet they brought them to those who they knew were violent against them, and were resolved to take violent courses with them, *ver. 27.* They brought them to set before the council, as delinquents. Thus the powers that should have been a terror to evil works and workers, became so to the good.

Secondly. Their examination ; being brought before this august assembly, the high priest, as the mouth of the court, told them what it was they had to lay to their charge, *ver. 28.*

1. That they had *disobeyed the commands of authority*, and would not submit to the injunctions, and prohibitions given them, *ver. 28.* *Did not we*, by virtue of our authority, straitly charge and command you, upon pain of our highest displeasure, *that you should not teach in this name ?* but you have disobeyed our commands, and go on to preach not only without our license, but against our express order. Thus they who make void the commandments of God, commonly are very strict in binding on their own commandments, and insisting upon their own power. *Did not we command you ?* Yes, they did ; but did not Peter at the same time tell them, that God's authority was superior to theirs, and his commands must take place of theirs ? And they had forgot that.

2. That they *spread false doctrine*, among the people, or at least a singular doctrine, and which was not allowed by the Jewish church, nor agreed with what was delivered from Moses's chair. *Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*, and thereby have disturbed the publick peace, and drawn people from the publick establishment. Some take this for a haughty scornful word, this silly senseless doctrine of yours, that is not worth taking notice of, you have made such a noise with, that even Jerusalem, the great and holy city, is become *full of it*, and it is all the talk of the town. They are angry that men, whom they looked upon as despicable, should make themselves thus considerable.

3. That they had a *malicious design against the government*, and aimed to stir up the people against it, by representing it as wicked and tyrannical, and that had made itself justly odious both to God and man ; *Ye intend to bring this man's blood*, the guilt of it before God, the shame of it before men, *upon us*. Thus they charge them not only with contumacy, and contempt of the court, but with sedition and faction, and a plot to set not only the people against them, for having persecuted even to death, not only so innocent, but so good and great a man as this Jesus, but the Romans too, for having drawn them into it. See here how those that with a great deal of presumption will do an ill thing, yet cannot bear to hear of it afterwards, or to have it charged upon them. When they were in the heat of the persecution, they could cry daringly enough, *His blood be upon us, and upon our children*, Let us bear the blame for ever : But now they have time for a cooler thought, they take it as a heinous affront to have his blood laid at their door. Thus are they convicted and condemned by their own consciences ; and dread lying under that guilt which they were not afraid to involve themselves in.

Thirdly, Their answer to the charge exhibited against them ; Peter and the other apostles all spake to the same purpose ; whether severally examined, or answering jointly, they spake as one and the same Spirit gave them utterance, depending upon the promise their Master had made them, that when they were brought before councils, it should be *given them in that same hour what they should speak*, and courage to speak it.

1. They justified themselves in their disobedience to the commands of the great Sanhedrin, as great as it was, *ver. 29.* *We ought to obey God rather than men.* They do not plead the power they had to work miracles, that spoke sufficiently for them, and therefore they humbly decline mentioning it themselves, but they appeal to a maxim universally owned, and which even natural conscience subscribes to, and which comes home to their case ; God had commanded them to teach in the name of Christ, and therefore they

ought to do it, though the chief priests forbade them. Those rulers set up in opposition to God, and have a great deal to answer for, who punish men for disobedience to them, in that which was their duty to God.

2. They justify themselves in doing what they could to fill Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ, though in preaching him up, they did indeed reflect upon those that maliciously run him down ; and if they thereby bring his blood upon them, they may thank themselves. It is charged upon them as a crime that they preached Christ and his gospel ; now, say they, we will tell you who this Christ is, and what his gospel is, and then do you judge whether we ought not to preach it ; nay, and we shall take this opportunity to preach it to you, *whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.*

1. The chief priests are told to their faces the indignities they did to this Jesus ; *Ye slew him, and hanged him on a tree*, you cannot deny it. The apostles, instead of making an excuse, or begging their pardon for bringing the guilt of this man's blood upon them, repeat the charge, and stand to it : It was you that slew him ; it was your act and deed. Note, Peoples being unwilling to hear of their faults, is no good reason why they should not be faithfully told of them. It is a common excuse made for not reproving sin, that the *times will not bear it*. But they whose office it is to reprove, must not be awed by that ; the times must bear it, and shall bear it ; *cry aloud, and spare not* ; cry aloud, and fear not.

2. They are told also what honours God put upon this Jesus, and then let them judge who was in the right, the persecutors of his doctrine, or the preachers of it : He calls God the *God of our fathers* ; not only *ours*, but *yours*, to shew that in preaching Christ they did not preach a new god, nor entice people to come and worship other gods ; nor did they set up an institution contrary to that of Moses and the prophets, but they adhered to the *God of the Jewish fathers*, and that name of Christ which they preached, answered the promises made to the fathers, and the covenant God entered into with them, and the types and figures of the law he gave them. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; see what honour he did him.

1. He *raised him up* ; i. e. he qualified him for, and called him to his great undertaking. It seems to refer to the promise God made by Moses, *a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.* God raised him up out of obscurity, and made him great. Or, it may be meant of his raising him up from the grave ; you put him to death, but God has restored him to life, so that God and you are manifestly contesting about this Jesus ; and which must we side with ?

2. He *exalted him with his right hand*, *ἡ δὲ δὴσὲς* hath lifted him up. You loaded him with disgrace, but God has crowned him with honour, and ought we not to honour him, whom God honours ? God has exalted him, *τὴν δεξιὰν αὐτοῦ*, with his right hand, i. e. by his power put forth, Christ is said to live by the power of God. Or, to his right hand, to sit there, to rest there, to rule there, he has invested him with the highest dignity, and intrusted him with the highest authority, and therefore we must teach in his name, for God has given him a name above every name.

3. He hath appointed him to be a prince and a saviour, and therefore we ought to preach in his name, and to publish the laws of his government, as he is a prince, and the offers of his grace, as he is a saviour. Observe, There is no having Christ to be our saviour, unless we be willing to take him for our prince : We cannot expect to be redeemed and healed by him, unless we give up ourselves to be ruled by him. The judges of old were saviours ; Christ's ruling is in order to his saving, and faith takes an intire Christ that came not to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sins.

4. He is appointed as a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Therefore they must preach in his name to the people of Israel, for his favours were designed primarily and principally for them, and none that truly loved their country could be against that. Why should the rulers and elders of Israel oppose one, who came with no less a blessing to Israel than repentance and pardon ? Had he been exalted to give deliverance to Israel from the Roman yoke, and dominion over the neighbouring nations, the chief priests would have welcomed him with all their hearts. But repentance and remission of sins are blessings they neither value nor see their need of, and therefore they can by no means admit his doctrine. Observe here,

1. Repentance and remission go together, wherever repentance is wrought, remission is without fail granted, and the favour given to all those to whom is given the qualification for it. And, on the other hand, no remission without repentance ; none are freed from the guilt and punishment of sin, but those that are freed from the power and dominion of sin ; that are turned from it, and turned against it. 2. It is Jesus Christ that gives, and is authorized to give both repentance and remission. Whatsoever is required in the gospel covenant is promised ; are we appointed to repent ? Christ is appointed to give repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work contrition for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The new heart is his work, and the broken spirit a sacrifice of his providing ; and when he has given repentance, if he should not give remission, he would forsake the work of his own hands. See how necessary it is that we repent

repent, and that we apply ourselves to Christ by faith for his grace to work repentance in us.

5. All this is well attested, 1. By the *apostles themselves*; they are ready to testify upon oath, if required, that they saw him alive after his resurrection, and saw him ascend into heaven; and also that they experienced the power of his grace upon their hearts, raising them up to that which was far above their natural capacities. *We are his witnesses*, appointed by him to publish this to the world, and if we should be silent, as you would have us, we should betray a trust, and be false to it. When a cause is in trying, witnesses of all men ought not to be silenced, for the issue of the cause depends on their testimony. 2. By the *Spirit of God*. We are witnesses, competent ones, and whose testimony is sufficient before any human judicature: But that is not all, *The holy Ghost is witness*, a witness from heaven, for *God hath given his gifts and graces to them that obey Christ*. Therefore we must preach in this name, because for this end the holy Ghost is given us, whose operations we cannot stifle.

Note, The giving of the holy Ghost to obedient believers, not only to bring them to the *obedience of faith*, but to make them eminently useful therein is a very strong proof of the truth of Christianity. God gave the holy Ghost by *his Son* and in *his name*, John xiv. 26. and in answer to his prayer, John xiv. 16. nay, it was Christ that sent him from the Father, John xv. 26. xvi. 7. and this proves the glory to which the Father has exalted him. The great work of the Spirit being not only to justify Christ, (1 Tim. iii. 16.) but to glorify him, and all his gifts having a direct tendency to exalt his name, proves that his doctrine is divine, else it would not be carried on thus by a divine power. And, (Lastly,) The giving of the holy Ghost to them that *obey Christ*, both for their assistance in their obedience, and as a present recompence for their obedience, is a plain evidence that it is the will of God that Christ should be obeyed; and then judge whether we ought to obey you in opposition to him.

Fourthly, The impression which the apostles defence of themselves made upon the court; it was contrary to what one would have expected from men that pretended to reason, learning, and sanctity; sure such fair reasoning could not but clear the prisoners, and convert the judges; no, instead of yielding to it, they raged against it, and were filled,

1. With indignation at what the apostles said; they were *cut to the hearts*, angry to see their own sin set in order before them; stark mad to find that the gospel of Christ had so much to say for itself, and consequently was likely to get ground. When a sermon was preached to the people to this purpose, they were *pricked to the heart*, in remorse and godly sorrow, Acts ii. 37. These here were *cut to the heart* with rage and indignation. Thus the same gospel is to some a favour of *life unto life*, to others of *death unto death*. The enemies of the gospel, not only deprive themselves of its comforts, but fill themselves with terrors, and are their own tormentors.

2. With malice against the apostles themselves; since they see they cannot stop their mouths, any other way but by stopping their breath, they *take counsel to slay them*, hoping that so they should *cause the work to cease*. While the apostles went on in the service of Christ with a holy security and serenity of mind, perfectly composed, and in a sweet enjoyment of themselves, their persecutors went on in their opposition to Christ, with a constant perplexity and perturbation of mind, and vexation to themselves.

Fifthly, The grave advice which Gamaliel, a topping man in the council, gave upon this occasion, the scope of which was to moderate the fury of these bigots, and check the violence of the prosecution. This Gamaliel is here said to be a Pharisee by his profession and sect, and by office a *doctor of the law*, one that studied the scriptures of the Old Testament, read lectures upon the sacred authors, and trained up pupils in the knowledge of them; Paul was brought up at his feet; Acts xxii. 3. and tradition saith, that so were Stephen and Barnabas. Some say he was the son of that Simeon that took up Christ in his arms, when he was presented in the temple; and grandson of the famous Hillel. He is here said to be *in reputation among all the people*, for his wisdom and conduct, it appearing by this passage that he was a moderate man, and not apt to go in with furious measures. Men of temper and charity are justly had in reputation, for checking the incendiaries that otherwise would set the world on fire. Now observe here,

1. The necessary caution he gives to the council, with reference to the case before them; he *commanded to put the apostles forth a little while*, that he might speak the more freely, and be the more freely answered: It was fit the prisoners should withdraw when their cause was to be debated; and then put the house in mind of the importance of this matter, which in their heart they were not capable of considering as they ought. *Ye men of Israel*, saith he, *Take heed to yourselves*, consider what you do, or intend to do as touching these men, ver. 35. it is not a common case, and therefore should not be hastily determined. He calls them men of Israel, to enforce this caution: You are men, that should be governed by reason, be not then as *the horse and the mule that have no understanding*; you are men of Israel, that should be governed by revelation, be not then as strangers and heathens, that have no regard to God and his word. *Take heed to yourselves*, now you are angry

as these men, lest you *meddle to your own hurt*. Note, The persecutors of God's people had best *look to themselves*, lest they fall into the pit which they dig. We have need to be cautious whom we give trouble to, lest we be found making the hearts of the righteous sad.

2. The cases he cites, to pave the way to his opinion; two instances he gives of factious seditious men; such as they would have the apostles thought to be, whose attempts came to nothing of themselves, from whence he infers, that if these men were indeed such as they represented them, their cause would sink with its own weight, and providence would insatiate and defeat them, and then they needed not persecute them.

1. There was one Theudas, that made a mighty noise for a while, as one sent of God, *boasting himself to be some body, some great one*, so the word is, either a teacher or a prince with a divine commission, to effect some great revolution either in the church or in the state; and he observes here, ver. 36. concerning him, 1. How far he prevailed: *a number of men*, about four hundred in all, joined themselves to him, that knew not what to do with themselves, or hoped to mend themselves; and they seemed then a formidable body. 2. How soon his pretensions were all dashed; for when *he was slain*, probably in war, there needed no more ado, *all as many as obeyed him were scattered*, and melted away like snow before the sun. Now compare that case with this, you have slain Jesus the ringleader of this faction, you have taken him off: Now if he was, as you say he was, an impostor and pretender, his death, like that of Theudas, will be the death of his cause, and the final dispersion of his followers. From what has been, we may infer what will be in a like case; the *smiting of the shepherd* will be the *scattering of the sheep*; and if the God of peace had not *brought again from the dead that great shepherd*, the dispersion of the sheep at his death, had been total and final.

2. The case was the same with Judas of Galilee, ver. 37. Observe, 1. The attempt he made. It is said to be *after this*; which some read, *besides this*, or let me mention, *after this*, supposing that Judas's insurrection was long in time before that of Theudas; for it was *in the time of the taxation*, viz. that at our Saviour's birth, Luke ii. 1. and that of Theudas, whom Josephus speaks of, that mutinied in the time of *Cuspius Fadus*; but that was in the days of Claudius Cesar, some years after Gamaliel spoke this, and therefore could not be the same. It is not easy to determine particularly when these events happened, nor whether this taxing were the same with that at our Saviour's birth, or one of a later date. Some think this Judas of Galilee was the same with Judas Gaulonites, whom Josephus speaks of, others not. It is probable they were cases that lately happened, and were fresh in memory; this *Judas drew away much people after him*, who gave credit to his pretensions. But, 2. Here is the defeat of his attempt, and that without any interposal of the great Sanhedrin, or any decree of theirs against him, it did not need, *he also perished, and all even as many as obeyed him*, or were persuaded by him, were dispersed. Many have foolishly thrown away their lives, and brought others into the same snares, by a jealousy for their liberties, *in the days of the taxing*, who had better have been content, when providence had so determined to *serve the king of Babylon*.

3. His opinion upon the whole matter.

1. That they should not persecute the apostles, ver. 38. *Now I say unto you, τὰ νῦν, for the present*, as the matter now stands, my advice is, *refrain from these men*; neither punish them for what they have done, nor restrain them for the future. Connive at them, let them take their course; *let not our hand be upon them*. It is uncertain whether he spoke this out of policy, for fear of offending either the people or the Romans, and making further mischief: The apostles did not attempt any thing by outward force, the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, and therefore why should any outward force be used against them? Or, whether he was under some present convictions, at least of the probability of the truth of the Christian doctrine, and thought it deserved better treatment, at least a fair trial; or, whether it was only the language of a mild quiet spirit, that was against persecution for conscience sake; or, whether God put this word into his mouth, beyond his own intention, for the deliverance of the apostles at this time; we are sure there was an over-ruling providence in it, that the servants of Christ might not only come off, but come off honourably.

2. That they should refer this matter to providence: Wait the issue, and see what it will come to. *If it be of men, it will come to nought of itself, if of God it will stand*, in spite of all your powers and policies. That which is apparently wicked and immoral must be suppressed, else the magistrate bears the sword in vain; but that which has a shew of good, and it is doubtful whether it be of *God or men*, it is best to *let it alone*, and let it take its fate, not to use any external force for the suppressing of it. Christ rules by the power of truth, not of the sword.

What Christ asked concerning John's baptism, *was it of heaven or of men?* was a question proper to be asked concerning the apostles doctrine and baptism, which followed Christ, as John baptist's went before him; now they having owned concerning the former, that they *could not tell* whether it was *from heaven or of men*, ought not to be too confident concerning the latter; but take it which way you will, it is a reason why they should not be persecuted.

1. If

1. If *this counsel, and this work*, this forming of a society, and incorporating it in the name of Jesus, *be of men, it will come to nothing*. If it be the counsel and work of foolish, crack-brained men, that know not what they do, let them alone a while, and they will run themselves out of breath, and *their folly will be manifest before all men*, and they will make themselves ridiculous. If it be the counsel and work of politick, designing men, who, under colour of religion, are setting up a secular interest, let them alone a while, and they will throw off the mask, and their knavery *will be manifest to all men*, and they will make themselves odious; and providence will never countenance it; *it will come to nothing* in a little time; and, if so, your persecuting and opposing it is very needless; there is no occasion for giving your selves so much trouble, and bringing such an odium upon yourselves, to kill that, which, if you give it a little time, will die of itself: The unnecessary use of power is an abuse of it: But,

2. If it should prove (and as wise men as you have been mistaken) *that this counsel and this work is of God*, that these preachers have their commissions and instructions from him, that they are as truly his messengers to the world, as the Old Testament prophets were; then what do you think of persecuting them? of this attempt of yours, *ver. 33. to slay them?* you must conclude it to be, 1. A fruitless attempt against them; *if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; for there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord; he that sits in heaven laughs at you*. It may be the comfort of all that are sincerely on God's side, that have a single eye to his will as their rule, and his glory as their end, that whatsoever is of God, cannot be *overthrown* totally and finally, though it may be very vigorously opposed; it may be run upon, but cannot be run down. 2. A dangerous attempt to themselves; pray let it alone, *lest haply ye be found even to fight against God*; and I need not tell you who will come off by the worse in that contest: *Wo unto him that strives with his Maker*, for he will not only be overcome as an impotent enemy, but severely reckoned with as a rebel and traitor against his rightful prince: They that hate and abuse God's faithful people, that restrain and silence his faithful ministers, *fight against God*, for he takes what is done against them, as done against himself; *who so touches them, touches the apple of his eye*.

Well, this was the advice of Gamaliel, we wish it were duly considered by those that persecute for conscience sake, for it was a good thought, and natural enough, though we are uncertain what the man was: The tradition of the Jewish writers is, that, for all this, he lived and died an inveterate enemy to Christ, and his gospel; and though (now at least) he was not for persecuting the followers of Christ, yet he was the man who composed that prayer, which the Jews use to this day, for the extirpating of Christians, and Christianity: On the contrary, the tradition of the Papists is, that he turned Christian, and became an eminent patron of Christianity, and a follower of Paul, who, when time was, had *sat at his feet*: If that had been so, it is very probable, we should have heard of him somewhere in the *Acts*, or *Epistles*.

Sixthly, The determination of the council upon the whole matter, *ver. 40*.

1. Thus far they agreed with Gamaliel, that they let fall the design of putting *the apostles to death*: They saw a great deal of reason in what Gamaliel said, and, for the present, it gave some check to their fury, and a remainder of their wrath was restrained by it:

2. Yet they could not forbear giving some vent to their rage (so outrageous was it) contrary to the convictions of their judgments, and consciences; for, though they were advised *to let them alone*, yet, 1. *They beat them*, scourged them as malefactors, stripped them, and whipped them, as they used to do in the synagogues, and notice is taken, *ver. 41. of the ignominy of it*; thus they thought to make them ashamed of preaching, and the people ashamed of hearing them; as Pilate scourged our Saviour to expose him, when yet he declared he found *no fault in him*. 2. *They commanded them that they should not speak any more in the name of Jesus*, that, if they could find no other fault with their preaching, they might have this ground to reproach it, that it was against law, and not only without the permission, but against the express order of their superiors.

Seventhly, The wonderful courage and constancy of the apostles in the midst of all these injuries and indignities done them. When they were dismissed, *they departed from the council*, and we do not find one word they said by way of reflection upon the court, and the unjust treatment given them; *when they were reviled, they reviled not again; and when they suffered, they threatened not; but committed their cause to him, to whom Gamaliel had referred it, even to a God who judgeth righteously*: All their business was to preserve the possession of their own souls, and *to make full proof of their ministry*, notwithstanding the opposition given them; and both these they did to admiration.

1. They bore their sufferings with an invincible cheerfulness, *ver. 41. When they went out*, perhaps, with the marks of the lashes, given them on their arms and hands, appearing, hissed at by the servants and rabble, it may be, or publick notice given of the infamous punishment they had undergone instead of being ashamed of Christ, and their relation to him, *they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*. They were men,

and men in reputation, that had never done any thing *to make themselves vile*, and therefore could not but have a sense of the *shame they suffered*, which, it should seem, was more grievous to them than the smart, as it useth to be to ingenuous minds; but they considered *that it was for the name of Christ* that they were thus abused, because they belonged to him, and served his interest, and their sufferings should be made to contribute to the further advancement of his name; and therefore, 1. They reckoned it an honour, looked upon it *that they were counted worthy to suffer shame*, *καταξιώσαντες ἀτιμασθῆναι*, *that they were honoured, to be dishonoured for Christ*: Reproach for Christ is true preferment, as it makes us conformable to his pattern, and servicable to his interest. 2. *They rejoiced in it*, remembling what their Master had said to them at their first setting out, *Matt. v. 11, 12. When men shall revile you, and persecute you, rejoice, and be exceeding glad*. They rejoiced, not only though *they suffered shame*, their troubles did not diminish their joy, but *that they suffered shame*, their troubles increased their joy, and added to it. If we suffer ill for doing well, provided we suffer it well, and as we should, we ought to rejoice in that grace which enabled us so to do.

2. They went on in their work with indefatigable diligence, *ver. 42. They were punished for preaching, and were commanded not to preach, and yet they ceased not to teach and preach*; they omitted no opportunity, nor abated any thing of their zeal or forwardness. Observe, 1. When they preached, *daily*; not only on sabbath days, or on Lord's days, but every day, as duly as the day came, without intermitting any day, as their Master did, *Luke xix. 47. Mt. xxvi. 55.* not fearing that they should either kill themselves, or cloy their hearers. 2. Where they preached; both publickly *in the temple*, and privately *in every house*; in promiscuous assemblies, to which all resorted; and in the select assemblies of Christians for special ordinances: They did not think that either one would excuse them from the other, for *the word must be preached in season and out of season*: Though *in the temple* they were more exposed, and under the eye of their enemies; yet they did not confine themselves to their little oratories in their own houses, but ventured into the post of danger: And though they had the liberty of *the temple*, a consecrated place, yet they made no difficulty of preaching in houses, *in every house*, even the poorest cottage: They visited the families of those that were under their charge, and gave particular instructions to them, according as their case required; even to the children and servants. 3. What was the subject matter of their preaching; *they preached Jesus Christ*; *they preached concerning him*; that was not all, *they preached him up*, they proposed him to those that heard them, *to be their Prince and Saviour*: They did not preach themselves, but Christ, as faithful friends *to the bridegroom*, making it their business to advance his interest. This was the preaching that gave most offence to the priests; they were willing *they should preach any thing but Christ*; but they would not alter their subject to please them. It ought to be the constant business of gospel ministers *to preach Christ; Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified*; nothing beside this, but what is reducible to it.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. *The discontent that was among the disciples about the distribution of the publick charity*, *ver. 1.* 2. *The election and ordination of seven men, who should take care of that matter, and ease the apostles of the burthen*, *ver. 2,—6.* 3. *The increase of the church, by the addition of many to it*, *ver. 7.* 4. *A particular account of Stephen, one of the seven.* (1.) *His great activity for Christ*, *ver. 8.* (2.) *The opposition he met with from the enemies of Christianity, and his disputes with them*, *ver. 9, 10.* (3.) *The convening of him before the great Sanhedrin, and the crimes laid to his charge*, *ver. 11,—14.* (4.) *God's owning him upon his trial*, *ver. 15.*

1. **A**ND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3. Wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4. But we will give our selves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5. ¶ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch. 6. Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem

Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Having seen the church's struggles with its enemies, and triumphed with her in her victories, we now come to take a view of the administration of its affairs at home; and here we have,

First, An unhappy disagreement among some of the church members, which might have been of ill consequence, but was prudently accommodated, and taken up in time, *ver. 1. When the number of the disciples* (for so Christians were at first called, learners of Christ) *was multiplied to many thousands in Jerusalem, then arose a murmuring.*

1. It doth our hearts good to find that *the number of the disciples is multiplied*, as, no doubt, it vexed the priests and Sadducees to the heart to see it. The opposition that the preaching of the gospel met with, instead of checking its progress, contributed to the success of it; and this infant Christian church, like the infant Jewish church in Egypt, *the more it was afflicted, the more it multiplied.* The preachers were beaten, threatened, abused, and yet the people received their doctrine, invited, no doubt, thereto, by their wonderful patience and cheerfulness under their trials, which convinced men, that they were borne up, and carried on, by a better spirit than their own.

2. Yet it casts a damp upon us to find that *the multiplying of the disciples* proves an occasion of discord. Hitherto they were all with one accord; this had been oft taken notice of to their honour; but now they were multiplied, they began to murmur; as in the old world, *when men began to multiply, they corrupted themselves. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased their joy,* Isa. ix. 7. When Abraham and Lot increased their families, *there was a strife between their herdmen*; so it was here, *there arose a murmuring*, not an open falling out, but a secret heart-burning.

(1.) The complainants were the Grecians, or Hellenists, against the Hebrews. The Jews that were scattered in Greece, and other parts, who ordinarily spoke the Greek tongue, and read the Old Testament in the Greek version, and not the original Hebrew, many of which, being at Jerusalem at the feast, embraced the faith of Christ, and were added to the church, and so continued there, these complained against the Hebrews, the native Jews, that used the original Hebrew of the Old Testament: Some of each of these became Christians, and, it seems, their joint embracing of the faith of Christ, did not prevail, as it ought to have done, to extinguish the little jealousies they had had one of another before their conversion, but they retained somewhat of that old leaven, not understanding, or not remembering, that in Christ Jesus, there is neither Greek nor Jew, no distinction of Hebrew and Hellenist, but all are alike welcome to Christ, and should be, for his sake, dear to one another.

(2.) The complaint of these Grecians was, that their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, i. e. in the distribution of the publick charity, and the Hebrew widows had more care taken of them. Observe, The first contention in the Christian church was about a money matter; but it is pity that the little things of this world should be make-baits among those that profess to be taken up with the great things of another world: A great deal of money was gathered for the relief of the poor, but, as useth to be in such cases, it was impossible to please every body in the laying of it out: The apostles, at whose feet it was laid, did their best to dispose of it, so as to answer the intentions of the donors, and, no doubt, designed to do it with the utmost impartiality, and were far from respecting the Hebrews more than the Grecians; and yet here they are complained to, and implicitly complained of, that the Grecian widows were neglected, though they were as real objects of charity, yet they had not so much allowed them, or not to so many, or not so duly paid them, as the Hebrews. Now, 1. Perhaps, this complaint was groundless and unjust, and there was no cause for it; but those who, upon any account, lie under disadvantages (as the Grecian Jews did, in comparison with them that were Hebrews of the Hebrews) are apt to be jealous that they are slighted, when really they are not so; and it is the common fault of poor people, that, instead of being thankful for what is given them, they are querulous and clamorous, and finding fault that more is not given them, or that more is given to others than to them; and there is envy and covetousness, those roots of bitterness, to be found among the poor, as well as among the rich, notwithstanding the humbling providences they are under, and should accommodate themselves to. But, 2. We will suppose, there might be some occasion for their complaint. (1.) Some suggest, that though their other poor were well provided for, yet their widows were neglected, because the managers governed themselves by an ancient rule which the Hebrews observed, that a widow was to be maintained by her husband's children: See 1 Tim. v. 4. But, (2.) I take it, that the widows are here put for all the poor, because many of them that were in the church book, and received alms, were widows, who were well provided for by the industry of their husbands while they lived, but were reduced to straits when they were gone. As those that have the administration of publick justice, ought, in a particular manner, to protect widows from injury, Isa. i. 17. Luke xviii. 3. so those that have the administration of publick charity, ought, in a particular

manner, to provide for widows what is necessary: See 1 Tim. v. 3. And observe, the widows here; and the other poor, had a daily ministrations; perhaps, they wanted forecast, and could not save for hereafter, and therefore the managers of the fund, in kindness to them, gave them, day by day, their daily bread; they lived from hand to mouth. Now, it seems, the Grecian widows were, comparatively, neglected; perhaps, those that disposed of the money; considered that there was more brought into the fund by the rich Hebrews, than was by the rich Grecians; who had not estates to sell, as the Hebrews had, and therefore the poor Grecians should have less out of the fund; this, though there was some tolerable reason for it, they thought hard and unfair. Note, In the best ordered church in the world there will be something amiss, some male-administration or other, some grievances, or, at least, some complaints; they are the best that have least and fewest.

Secondly, The happy accommodating of this matter, and the expedient pitched upon for the taking away of the cause of this murmuring. The apostles had hitherto the directing of the matter, applications were made to them, and appeals in case of grievances; they were obliged to employ persons under them, who did not take all the care they might have taken, nor were so well fortified, as they should have been, against temptations to partiality; and therefore some persons must be chosen to manage this matter, who have more leisure to attend it than the apostles had, and were better qualified for the trust than those whom the apostles employed were. Now observe,

1. How the method was proposed by the apostles: They called the multitude of the disciples unto them, the heads of the congregations of Christians in Jerusalem, the principal leading men: The twelve themselves would not determine any thing without them, for in multitude of counsellors there is safety; and, in an affair of this nature, they might be best able to advise, who were more conversant in the affairs of this life, than the apostles were.

(1.) The apostles urge that they could by no means admit so great a diversion, as this would be, from their great work, *ver. 2. It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.* Receiving and paying money was serving tables, too like the tables of the money-changers in the temple; this was foreign to the business which the apostles were called to, they were to preach the word of God; and though they had not such occasion to study for what they preached as we have, it being given in that same hour what they should speak, yet they thought that was work enough for a whole man, and to employ all their thoughts, and cares, and time, though one man of them was more than ten of us, than ten thousand: If they serve tables, they must, in some measure, leave the word of God; they could not attend their preaching work so closely as they ought. *Postera nostra duas non admittunt curas.* Though this serving tables was for pious uses, and serving the charity of rich Christians, and the necessity of poor Christians, and, in both, serving Christ, yet the apostles would not take so much time from their preaching as this would require: They will no more be drawn from their preaching by the money laid at their feet, than they will be drawn from it by the stripes laid on their backs. While the number of the disciples was few, the apostles might manage this matter without making it any considerable avocation from their main business; but now their number was increased they could not do it. *It is not reason, ἐκ ἀγασθῆναι, it is not fit or commendable, that we should neglect the business of feeding souls with the bread of life, to attend the business of relieving the bodies of the poor.* Note, Preaching the gospel is the best work, and the most proper and needful that a minister can be employed in, and that which he must give himself wholly to, 1 Tim. iv. 15. which, that he may do, he must not entangle himself in the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4. no, not in the outward business of the house of God, Neh. xi. 16.

(2.) They therefore desire that seven men might be chosen, well qualified for the purpose, whose business it should be to serve tables, διακονεῖν τραπέζης, to be deacons to the tables, *ver. 3.* The business must be minded, must be better minded than it had been, and than the apostles could mind it, and therefore proper persons must be chosen, who, though they might be occasionally employed in the word, and prayer, yet were not so devoted entirely to it as the apostles were; and these must take care of the church's stock, must review, and pay, and keep accounts; must buy those things which they had need of against the feast, John xiii. 29. and attend to all those things which are necessary, in ordine ad spiritualia, in order to spiritual exercises, that every thing might be done decently, and in order, and no person or thing neglected. Now,

1. The persons must be duly qualified: The people are to choose, and the apostles to ordain; but the people have no authority to choose, nor the apostles to ordain men utterly unfit for the office: Look out seven men, so many they thought might suffice for the present, more might be added afterwards if there were occasion; these must be, 1. Of honest report, men free from scandal, that were looked upon by their neighbours as men of integrity, and faithful men, well attested to, as men that might be trusted; not under a blemish for any vice, but, on the contrary, well spoken of for every thing that is virtuous, and praiseworthy; ἀσφύλατοι, men that can produce good testimonials concerning their

conversation. Note, Those that are employed in any office in the church, ought to be men of *honest report*, of a blameless, nay, of a beautiful character, which is requisite, not only to the credit of their office, but to the due discharge of it. 2. They must be *full of the holy Ghost*, must be filled with those gifts and graces of the *holy Ghost*, which were necessary to the right management of this trust; they must not only be honest men, but they must be men of parts, and men of courage; such as were to be made judges in Israel, *Exod. xviii. 21. able men, fearing God; men of truth, and hating covetousness*; and hereby appearing to be *full of the holy Ghost*. 3. They must be *full of wisdom*: It was not enough that they were honest, good men, but they must be discreet, judicious men, that could not be imposed upon, and would order things for the best, and with consideration: *Full of the holy Ghost, and wisdom, i. e. of the holy Ghost as a Spirit of wisdom*. We find the *word of wisdom given by the Spirit*, as distinct from the *word of knowledge by the same Spirit*, 1 Cor. xii. 8. They must be *full of wisdom* who are intrusted with publick money, that it may be disposed of, not only with fidelity, but with frugality.

2. The people must nominate the persons: *Look ye out among you seven men*, consider among yourselves who are the fittest for such a trust, and whom you can with the most satisfaction confide in: They might be presumed to know better, or, at least, were fitter to enquire what character men had, than the apostles; and therefore they are intrusted with the choice.

3. The apostles will ordain them to the service, will give them their charge, that they may know what they have to do, and make conscience of doing it; and give them their authority, that the persons concerned may know whom they are to apply to, and submit to, in affairs of that nature; *men, whom we may appoint*. In many editions of our English bibles, there has been an error of the press here, for they have read it, *whom ye may appoint*; as if the power were in the people; whereas it was certainly in the apostles; *whom we may appoint over this business*, to take care of it, and to see that there be neither waste nor want.

(3.) The apostles engage to addict themselves wholly to their work as ministers, and the more closely, if they can but get fairly quit of this troublesome office, *ver. 4. We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*. See here, 1. What are the two great gospel ordinances, *the word*, and *prayer*; by these two communion between God and his people is kept up and maintained; by *the word* he speaks to them, and by *prayer* they speak to him; and these have a mutual reference to each other: By these two the kingdom of Christ must be advanced, and additions made to it; we must *prophecy upon the dry bones*, and then *pray for a spirit of life from God to enter into them*: By *the word*, and *prayer*, other ordinances are sanctified to us, and sacraments have their efficacy. 2. What is the great business of gospel ministers; *to give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*; they must still be either fitting and furnishing themselves for those services, or employing themselves in them; either publicly, or privately; in the stated times, or out of them: They must be God's mouth to the people in *the ministry of the word*, and the peoples mouth to God in *prayer*. In order to the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the edification and consolation of saints, we must not only *offer up our prayers for them*, but we must *minister the word to them*, seconding our prayers with our endeavours, in the use of appointed means; nor must we only *minister the word to them*, but we must *pray for them, that it may be effectual*; for God's grace can do all without our preaching, but our preaching can do nothing without God's grace. The apostles were *endued with extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost, tongues, and miracles*, and yet that which they gave themselves continually to, was preaching and praying, by which they might edify the church: And those ministers, without doubt, are the successors of the apostles (not in the plenitude of the apostolical power, those are daring usurpers who pretend to that, but in the best and most excellent of the apostolical work) who *give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*; and such Christ will always be with, *even to the end of the world*.

2. How this proposal was agreed to, and presently put in execution by the disciples; it was not imposed upon them by an absolute power, though they might have been bold in Christ to do that (*Philemon 8.*) but proposed, as that which was highly convenient, and then the saying pleased the whole multitude, *ver. 5. It pleased them to see the apostles so willing to discharge themselves from intermeddling in secular affairs, and to transmit them to others; it pleased them to hear that they would give themselves to the word, and prayer*; and therefore they neither disputed the matter, nor deferred the execution of it.

(1.) They pitched upon the persons; it is not likely they all cast their eye upon the same men; every one had his friend, whom he thought well of; but the major vote fell upon the persons here named; and the rest, both of the candidates and electors, acquiesced, and made no disturbance, as the members of societies, in such cases, ought to do. An apostle, who was an extraordinary officer, was chosen by *lot*, which is more immediately the act of God; but the overseers of the poor, were chote by the suffrage of the people; in which, yet a regard is to be had to the providence of God, who has all mens hearts and tongues in his hand.

We have a list of the persons chosen; some think, they were such as were before of *the seventy disciples*; but that is not likely; for they were ordained by Christ himself, long since, *to preach the gospel*; and there was no more reason that they should leave the *word of God to serve tables*, than that the apostles should; it is therefore more probable, that they were of those that were converted since *the pouring out of the Spirit*; for it was promised to all that would be baptized, *that they should receive the gift of the holy Ghost*; and the gift, according to that promise, is *that fulness of the holy Ghost*, which was required in those that were to be chosen to this service. We may further conjecture, concerning these seven, 1. That they were such as had sold their estates, and brought the money into the common stock; for, *cæteris paribus*, these were fittest to be intrusted with the distribution of it, who had been most generous in the contribution to it. 2. That these seven were all of the Grecian or Hellenist Jews, for they have all Greek names, and this would be most likely to silence the murmurings of the Grecians (which occasioned this institution) to have the trust lodged in those that were foreigners, like themselves, who would be sure not to neglect them; *Nicolas*, it is plain, was one of them, for he was a *profelyte of Antioch*; and, some think, the manner of expression intimates, *that they were all profelytes of Jerusalem*, as he was of *Antioch*.

The first named is *Stephen*, the glory of these *septem-viri*; a man full of faith and of the holy Ghost; he had a strong faith in the doctrine of Christ, and was full of it above most; full of fidelity, full of courage, so some; for he was full of the holy Ghost, of his gifts and graces; he was an extraordinary man, and excelled in every thing that was good; his name signifies a crown. *Philip* is put next, because he having used this office of a deacon well, thereby obtained a good degree, and was afterwards ordained to the office of an evangelist, a companion and assistant to the apostles, for so he is expressly called, *Acts xxi. 8. compare Eph. iv. 11.* And his preaching and baptizing, which we read of, *Acts viii. 12.* was certainly not as a deacon, for it is plain that office was *serving tables*, in opposition to the ministry of the word, but as an evangelist; and when he was preferred to that office, we have reason to think he quitted this office, as incompatible with that: And as for *Stephen*, nothing we find done by him proves him to be a preacher of the gospel; for he only disputes in the schools, and pleads for his life at the bar, *ver. 9. and chap. vii. 2.*

The last named is *Nicolas*, who, some say, afterwards degenerated (as the Judas among these seven) and was the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitans, which we read of, *Rev. ii. 6, 15.* and which Christ there saith, once and again, was a thing he hated. But some of the ancients clear him from that charge and tell us, that though that vile, impure sect denominated themselves from him, yet it was unjustly, and, because he only insisted much upon it, *that they that had wives should be as though they had none*, thence they wickedly inferred, *that they that had wives should have them in common*; which therefore Tertullian, when he speaks of the community of goods, particularly excepts, *Omnia indiscreta apud nos, præter uxores*, *Apol. cap. xxxix.*

(2.) The apostles appointed them to this work of *serving tables* for the present, *ver. 6.* The people presented them to the apostles, who approved their choice, and ordained them. 1. They prayed with them, and for them, that God would give them more and more of the holy Ghost, and of wisdom; that he would qualify them for the service to which they were called, and own them in it, and make them thereby a blessing to the church, and particularly to the poor of the flock. All that are employed in the service of the church, ought to be committed to the conduct of the divine grace, by the prayers of the church. 2. They laid their hands on them, i. e. they blessed them in the name of the Lord, for laying on hands was used in blessing; so Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph; and, without controversy, the less is blessed of the greater, *Heb. vii. 7.* the deacons are blessed by the apostles, and the overseers of the poor by the pastors of the congregation. Having, by prayer, implored a blessing upon them, they did, by the laying on of hands, assure them that the blessing was conferred in answer to the prayer; and this was giving them authority to execute that office, and laying an obligation upon the people to be observant of them therein.

Thirdly, The advancement of the church hereupon; when things were thus put into good order in the church, grievances were redressed, and discontents silenced, then religion got ground, *ver. 7.*

1. The word of God increased; now the apostles resolved to stick more closely than ever to their preaching, it spread the gospel further, and brought it home with the more power. Ministers disentangling themselves from secular employments, and addicting themselves intirely and vigorously to their work, will contribute very much, as a means, to the success of the gospel. The word of God is said to increase, as the seed sown increaseth, when it comes up again thirty, sixty, a hundred fold.

2. Christians grow numerous; the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly: When Christ was upon earth, his ministry had least success in Jerusalem, yet now that city affords most converts: God has his remnant even in the worst of places.

3. *A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*; then is the word and grace of God greatly magnified, when those are wrought upon by it that were least likely, as the priests here who either had opposed it, or at least were linked in with those that had. The priests whose preferments arose from the law of Moses, yet were willing to let them go for the gospel of Christ; and, it should seem, they came in, *in a body*, many of them *agreed together* for the keeping up of one another's credit, and the strengthening of one another's hands, to join at once in giving up their names to Christ, *πολλοὶ ὄχλοι*, a great croud of priests were by the grace of God helped over their prejudices, and were obedient to the faith, so their conversion is described. 1. They embraced the doctrine of the gospel; their understandings were captivated to the power of the truths of Christ, and every opposing, objecting thought, brought into obedience to him, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The gospel is said to be made known for the obedience of faith, Rom. xvi. 26. Faith is an act of obedience, for this is God's commandment that we believe, 1 John iii. 23. 2. They evidenced the sincerity of their believing the gospel of Christ by a cheerful compliance with all the rules and precepts of the gospel. The design of the gospel is to refine and reform our hearts and lives; it is faith gives law to us, and we must be obedient to it.

8. And Stephen full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9. ¶ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, 13. And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law. 14. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Stephen no doubt was diligent and faithful in the discharge of his office as distributor of the church's charity, and laid out himself to put that affair in a good method, and did it to universal satisfaction; and though it appears here that he was a man of uncommon gifts, and fitted for a higher station, yet being called to that office he did not think it below him to do the duty of it. And being faithful in a little, he was soon intrusted with more; and though we do not find him propagating the gospel by preaching and baptizing, yet we find him here called out to very honourable services and owned in them.

First, He proved the truth of the gospel, by working miracles in Christ's name, ver. 8.

1. He was full of faith and power, i. e. of a strong faith by which he was enabled to do great things. They that are full of faith, are full of power, because by faith the power of God engaged for us. His faith did so fill him, that it left no room for unbelief, and made room for the influences of divine grace, so that as the prophet speaks he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Mic. iii. 8. By faith we are emptied of self, and so are filled with Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

2. Being so, he did great wonders and miracles among the people, openly, and in the sight of all, for Christ's miracles feared not the strictest scrutiny. It is not strange that Stephen, though he was not a preacher by office, yet did these great wonders, for we find that these were distinct gifts of the Spirit, and divided severally, for to one was given the working of miracles, and to another prophecy, 1 Cor. xii. 10, 11. And those signs followed not only them that preached, but them that believed, Mark xvi. 17.

Secondly, He pleaded the cause of Christianity against those that opposed it and argued against it, ver. 9, 10. he served the interest of religion as a disputant, in the high places of the field, while others were serving them as vinedressers and husbandmen.

1. We are here told who were his opponents, ver. 9. They were Jews, but Hellenist Jews, Jews of the dispersion, who seem to have been more zealous for their religion than the native Jews; it was with difficulty that they retained the practice and profession of it in the country where they lived, where they were as speckled birds, and not without great expence and toil that they kept up their attendance at Jerusalem, and this made them more active sticklers for Judaism, than they were whose profession of their religion was cheap and easy. They were of the synagogue which is called *the synagogue of the Libertines*; the Romans called those *Liberti* or *Libertini*, that either being foreigners, were naturalized, or being slaves by birth, were manumitted or made freemen. Some think, these Libertines were such of the Jews as had obtained the Roman freedom, as Paul had, Acts xv. 37. And it is probable, he was the most forward man of this synagogue of the Libertines in disputing

with Stephen, and engaged others in the dispute; for we find him busy in the stoning of Stephen, and consenting to his death. There were others that belonged to the synagogue of the Cyrenians and Alexandrians of which synagogue the Jewish writers speak; and others that belonged to their synagogue, who were of Cilicia, and Asia; and if Paul, as a freeman of Rome, did not belong to the synagogue of the Libertines, he belonged to this, as a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia; it is probable, he might be a member of both. The Jews that were born in other countries, and had concerns in them, had frequent occasion not only to resort to, but to reside in Jerusalem. And each nation had its synagogue, as in London there are French, and Dutch, and Danish churches: And those synagogues were the schools to which the Jews of those nations sent their youth to be educated in the Jewish learning. Now those that were tutors and professors in these synagogues, seeing the gospel grow, and the rulers conniving at the growth of it, and fearing what would be the consequence of it to the Jewish religion, which they were jealous for, being confident of the goodness of their cause, and their own sufficiency to manage it, would undertake to run down Christianity by force of argument; and it was a fair and rational way of dealing with it, and what religion is always ready to admit, produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons, Isa. xli. 21. But why did they dispute with Stephen? And why not with the apostles themselves? 1. Some think because they despised the apostles as *unlearned and ignorant men*, whom they thought it below them to engage with; but Stephen was bred a scholar, and they thought it their honour to meddle with their match. 2. Others think it was because they stood in awe of the apostles, and could not be so free and familiar with them as they could be with Stephen, who was in an inferior office. 3. Perhaps they having given a publick challenge, Stephen was chose and appointed by the disciples to be their champion; for it was not meet that the apostles should leave the preaching of the word of God to engage in controversy. Stephen that was only a deacon in the church, and a very sharp young man, and of bright parts, and better qualified to deal with wrangling disputants than the apostles themselves, is appointed to this service. 4. Some historians say, that Stephen had been bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, and Saul and the rest of them set upon him as a deserter, and with a particular fury made him their mark. 5. It is probable, they disputed with Stephen because he was zealous to argue with them, and convince them. And this was the service which God had called him to.

2. We are here told how he carried the point in this dispute, ver. 10. They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit, by which he spake. They could not either support their own arguments, or answer his. He proved by such irresistible arguments that Jesus is the Christ, and delivered himself with so much clearness and fulness, that they had nothing to object against what he said; though they were not convinced, yet they were confounded. It is not said, they were not able to resist him, but they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake, i. e. that Spirit of wisdom which spake by him: Now was fulfilled that promise, I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist, Luke xxi. 15. They thought they had only disputed with Stephen, and could make their part good with him; but they were disputing with the Spirit of God in him, for whom they were an unequal match.

Thirdly, At length he sealed it with his blood; so we shall find he did in the next chapter, here we have some steps taken by his enemies towards it. When they could not answer his arguments as a disputant, they prosecuted him as a criminal, and suborned witnesses against him to swear blasphemy upon him. "On such terms (saith Mr. Baxter here) do we dispute with malignant men. And it is next to a miracle of providence, that no greater number of religious persons have been murdered in the world, by the way of perjury and pretence of law, when so many thousands hate them who make no conscience of false oaths." They suborned men, i. e. instructed them what to say, and then hired them to swear it. They were the more enraged against him, because he had proved them to be in the wrong, and shewed them the right way; for which they ought to have given him their best thanks; was he therefore become their enemy, because he told them the truth, and proved it to be so? Now let us observe here,

1. How with all possible art and industry they incensed both the government and the mob against him, that if they could not prevail by the one, they might by the other, ver. 12. They stirred up the people against him, that if the Sanhedrin should still think fit, according to Gamaliel's advice, to let him alone, yet they might run him down by a popular rage and tumult; they also find means to stir up the elders and the scribes against him, that if the people should countenance and protect him, they might prevail by authority. Thus they doubted not but to gain their point, when they had two strings to their bow.

2. How they got him to the bar; they came upon him, when he little thought of it, and caught him and brought him to the council. They came upon him in a body, and flew upon him as a lion on his prey; so the word signifies. By their rude and violent treatment of him, they would represent him, both to the people and to the government, as a dangerous man, that would either flee from justice

Justice, if he were not watched, or fight with it, if he were not put under a force. Having caught him, they brought him triumphantly into the council, and as it should seem, so hastily that he had none of his friends with him. They had found when they brought many together, they emboldened one another, and strengthened one another's hands; and therefore they will try how to deal with them singly.

3. How they were prepared with evidence ready to produce against him; they were resolved they would not be run a-ground as they were when they brought our Saviour upon his trial, and then were to seek for witnesses. These were got ready before hand, and were instructed to make oath, that they had *heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God*, ver. 11. against *this holy place and the law*, ver. 13. for they heard him say, *what Jesus would do to their place and their customs*, ver. 14. It is probable, he had said something to that purpose; and yet they who swore it against him, are called *false witnesses*, because though there was something of truth in their testimony, yet they put a wrong and malicious construction upon what he had said, and perverted it. Observe,

1. What was the general charge exhibited against him, that he *spoke blasphemous words*; and to aggravate the matter, he *causeth not to speak blasphemous words*; it is common talk, his discourse in all companies, wheresoever he comes; he makes it his business to instil his notions into all he converseth with. It intimates likewise something of contumacy and contempt of admonition; he hath been warned against it, and yet ceaseth not to talk at this rate. Blasphemy is justly reckoned a heinous crime, to speak contemptibly and reproachfully of God our maker, and therefore Stephen's persecutors would be thought to have a mighty concern upon them for the honour of God's name, and to do this in a jealousy for that: As it was with the confessors and martyrs of the Old Testament, so it was with those of the New, their *brethren* that *hated them and cast them out* said, *Let the Lord be glorified*; and pretended they *did him service in it*.

He is said to have spoken blasphemous words *against Moses and against God*: Thus far they were right, that they who blaspheme Moses, if they mean the writings of Moses, which were given by inspiration of God, blaspheme God himself. They that speak reproachfully of the scriptures, and ridicule them, reflect upon God himself, and do despite to him. His great intention is to *magnify the law and make it honourable*; those therefore that vilify the law and make it contemptible, blaspheme his name; for he has *magnified his word above all his name*.

But, did Stephen blaspheme Moses? By no means, he was far from it. Christ, and the preachers of his gospel, never said any thing that looked like blaspheming Moses, they always quoted his writings with respect, appealed to them, and *said no other things* but what Moses said should come; very unjustly therefore is Stephen indicted for blaspheming Moses. But,

2. Let us see how this charge is supported and made out; why, truly when the thing was to be proved, all they can charge him with is, that *he hath spoken blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law*; and this must be deemed and taken as blasphemy *against Moses, and against God himself*. Thus doth the charge dwindle when it comes to the evidence. 1. He is charged with blaspheming *this holy place*. Some understand that of the city of Jerusalem, which was the *holy city*, and which they had a mighty jealousy for: But it is rather meant of the temple, that holy house. Christ was condemned as a blasphemer for words which were thought to reflect upon the temple, which they seemed concerned for the honour of, then when they by their wickedness had profaned it. 2. He is charged with blaspheming *the law*; of which they *made their boast*, and in which they put their trust, then when through breaking of the law they *disbonoured God*, Rom. ii. 23.

Well, But how can they make this out? Why, here the charge dwindles again; for all they can accuse him of is, that *they had themselves heard him say*, (but how it came in, or what explication he gave of it, they think not themselves bound to give account) that this *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was so much talked of, *shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered us*. He could not be charged with having said any thing to the disparagement either of the temple or of the law. The priests had themselves profaned the temple by making it not only a *house of merchandise*, but a *den of thieves*; yet they would be thought zealous for the honour of it, against one that had never said any thing amiss of it, but had attended it more as a *house of prayer*, according to the true intention of it, than they had. Nor had he ever reproached the law, as they had.

But, 1. He had said, that *Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place*; destroy the temple, destroy Jerusalem. It is likely he might say so; and what blasphemy is it against the holy place, to say, that it should not be perpetual any more than Shiloh was? And that the just and holy God would not continue the privileges of his sanctuary to those that abused them? Had not the prophets given the same warning to their fathers of the destruction of that holy place by the Chaldeans? Nay, when the temple was first built, had not God himself given the same warning? *This house which is built, shall be an overthrow*, 1 Chron. vii. 21. And is he a blas-

phemer then who tells them, that Jesus of Nazareth, if they continue their opposition to him, will bring a just destruction upon their place and nation, and they may thank themselves? Those wickedly abuse their profession of religion, who under colour of that, call the reproofs given them for their disagreeable conversations, blasphemous reflexions upon their religion.

2. He had said, that *this Jesus shall change the customs which Moses delivered us*. And it was expected, that in the days of the Messiah they should be changed, and that the shadows should be done away when the substance was come; yet this was no essential change of the law, but the perfecting of it; *Christ came not to destroy*, but to fulfil the law; and if he changed some customs that Moses delivered, it was to introduce and establish those that were much better. And if the Jewish church had not obstinately refused to come in to this new establishment, and adhered to the ceremonial law, for ought I know, *their place* had not been destroyed; so that for putting them into a certain way to prevent their destruction, and for giving them certain notice of their destruction if they did not take that way, he is accused as a blasphemer.

Lastly, We are here told how God owned him when he was brought before the council, and made it to appear, that he stood by him, ver. 15. *All that sat in the council*, the priests, scribes and elders, *looking stedfastly on him*, being a stranger, and one they had not yet had before them, they *saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*. It is usual for judges to observe the countenance of the prisoner, which sometimes is an indication either of guilt or innocence: Now Stephen appeared at the bar with the countenance *as of an angel*.

1. Perhaps it intimates no more, than that he had an extraordinary pleasant, cheerful countenance, and there was not in it the least sign either of fear for himself, or anger at his persecutors; he looked as if he were never better pleased in his life than he was now when he was called out to bear his testimony to the gospel of Christ thus publicly, and stood fair for the crown of martyrdom. Such an undisturbed serenity, such an undaunted courage, and such an unaccountable mixture of mildness and majesty there was in his countenance, that every one said, he looked like an angel; enough sure to convince the Sadducees that *there are angels*, when they saw before their eyes an incarnate angel.

2. It should rather seem that there was a miraculous splendor and brightness upon his countenance, like that of our Saviour, when he was transfigured; or at least that of Moses, when he came down from the mount; God designing thereby to put honour upon his faithful witness, and confusion upon his persecutors and judges, whose sin would be highly aggravated, and would be indeed a rebellion against the light, it notwithstanding this, they proceeded against him. Whether he himself wist that the skin of his face shone or no, we are not told; but *all that sat in the council saw it*, and probably took notice of it to one another, and an errant shame it was that when they saw it, and could not but see by it that he was owned of God, they did not call him from standing at the bar, to sit in the chief seat upon the bench. Wisdom and holiness make a man's face to shine, and yet these will not secure men from the greatest indignities; and no wonder, when the shining of Stephen's face would not be his protection; though it had been easy to prove, that if he had been guilty of putting any dishonour upon Moses, God would not thus have put Moses's honour upon him.

CHAP. VII.

When our Lord Jesus called his apostles out to be employed in services and sufferings for him, he told them, that yet the last should be first, and the first last; which was remarkably fulfilled in St. Stephen and St. Paul, who were both of them late converts, in comparison of the apostles, and yet got the start of them, both in services and sufferings; for God in conferring honours and favours, often crosseth hands: In this chapter we have the martyrdom of Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian church, who led the van in that noble army. And therefore his sufferings and death are more largely related than of any other, for direction and encouragement to all those who are called out to resist unto blood, as he did. Here is, (1.) His defence of himself before the council, in answer to the matters and things he stood charged with, the scope of which is to shew, that it was no blasphemy against God, nor any injury at all to the glory of his name, to say, that the temple should be destroyed, and the customs of the ceremonial law changed. And, (1.) He shews this by going over the history of the Old Testament, and observing, that God never intended to confine his favours to that place, or that ceremonial law; and that they had no reason to expect he should, for the people of the Jews had always been a provoking people, and had forfeited the privileges of their peculiarity: Nay, that that holy place, and that law, were but figures of good things to come, and it was no disparagement at all to them to say, that they must give place to better things, ver. 1.—50. And then, (2.) He applies this to them that prosecuted him, and set in judgment upon him, sharply reproving them for their wickedness by which they had brought upon themselves the ruin of their place and nation, and then could not bear to hear of it, ver. 51.—53. (3.) The putting of him to death by stoning of him, and his patient, cheerful, pious submission to it, ver. 54.—60.

1. Then

1. **T**hen said the high priest, Are these things so? 2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers hearken, The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell. 5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child. 6. And God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. 7. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage, will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day: and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. 9. And the patriarchs moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10. And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house. 11. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance. 12. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13. And at the second time Joseph was made known unto Pharaoh. 14. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he and our fathers. 16. And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

Stephen is now at the bar before the great council of the nation, indicted for blasphemy: what the witnesses swore against him, we had an account of in the foregoing chapter, that he spoke blasphemous words against Moses and God; for he spoke against this *holy place*, and *the law*. Now here,

1. The high priest calls upon him to answer for himself, *ver. 1.* He was president, and, as such, the mouth of the court, and therefore he saith, you, the prisoner at the bar, you hear what is sworn against you, what do you say to it? *Are these things so?* Have you ever spoken any words to this purpose? If you have, will you recant them, or will you stand to them? *guilty or not guilty?* This carried a shew of fairness, and yet seems to have been spoken with an air of haughtiness; and thus far he seems to have prejudged the cause, that if it were so, that he had spoken such and such words, he shall certainly be adjudged a blasphemer, whatever he may offer in justification or explanation of them.

2. He begins his defence, and it is long, but it should seem by his breaking off abruptly, just when he came to the main point, *ver. 50.* that it would have been much longer, if his enemies would have given him leave to say all he had to say. In general we may observe,

1. That in this discourse he appears to be a man ready and mighty in the scriptures, and thereby thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. He can relate scripture stories, and such as were very pertinent to his purpose, off-hand, without looking in his bible. He was *filled with the holy Ghost*, not so much to reveal to him new things, or open to him the secret counsels and decrees of God concerning the Jewish nation, with them to convict these gainsayers; no, but to bring to his remembrance the scriptures of the Old Testament, and to teach him how to make use of them for their conviction. They that are full of the holy Ghost, will be full of the scripture, as Stephen was.

2. That he quotes the scriptures according to the Septuagint translation, by which it appears he was one of the Hellenist Jews, who used that version in their synagogues: And his following that, occasions divers variations from the Hebrew original in this discourse, which the judges of the court did not correct, because they knew how he was led into them; nor is it any derogation to the authority of that Spirit by which he spoke, for the variations are not material. We have a maxim, *Apices juris non sunt jura.*

These verses carry on this his compendium of church history to the end of the book of Genesis. Observe,

1. His preface; *men, brethren and fathers, hearken.* He gives them, though not flattering titles, yet civil and respectful ones, signifying his expectation of fair treatment with them; from men,

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he hopes to be treated with humanity, and that brethren and fathers will use him in a fatherly, brotherly way. They are ready to look upon him as an apostate from the Jewish church, and an enemy to them. But to make way for their conviction to the contrary, he addresseth himself to them, as *men, brethren, and fathers*, resolving to look on himself as one of them, though they would not so look on him. He craves their attention; hearken; though he was about to tell them what they already knew, yet he begs of them to hearken to it, because though they knew it all, yet they would not without a very close application of mind, know how to apply it to the case before them.

2. His entrance upon the discourse; which (however it may seem to those that read it carelessly) is far from being a long ramble only to amuse the hearers, and give them a diversion by telling them an old story. No; it is all pertinent, and *ad rem*, to shew them, that God had not his heart so much upon that *holy place* and *the law*, as they had; but as he had a church in the world many ages before that holy place was founded, and the ceremonial law given, so he would have, when they should both have had their period.

First, He begins with the call of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, by which he was set apart for God to be the trustee of the promise, and the father of the Old Testament church. This we had an account of, *Gen. xii. 1, &c.* And it is referred to, *Neh. ix. 7, 8.* His native country, was an idolatrous country, it was Mesopotamia, *ver. 2. the land of the Chaldeans*, *ver. 4.* thence God brought him at two removes, not too far at once, dealing tenderly with him, he first brought him out of the land of the Chaldeans to Charran, or Haran, a place in the midway between that and Canaan, *Gen. xi. 31.* and from thence five years after, when his father was dead, he removed him into the land of Canaan, *wherein ye now dwell.* It should seem, the first time that God spoke to Abraham, he appeared in some visible display of the divine presence, as the *God of glory*, *ver. 3. to settle a correspondence* with him: and then afterwards he kept up that correspondence, and spoke to him from time to time as there was occasion, without repeating his visible appearances as the *God of glory*.

From this call of Abraham, we may observe, 1. That in all our ways we must acknowledge God, and attend the conduct of his providence, as of the pillar of cloud and fire. It is not said, *Abraham removed*, but *God removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell*, and he did but follow his leader. 2. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself, he distinguisheth from the children of this world; they are effectually called out of the state, out of the land of their nativity; they must sit loose to the world, and live above it, and every thing in it, even that in it which is most dear to them, and must trust God to make it up to them in another and better country; that is, the heavenly, which he will shew them. God's chosen must follow him with an implicit faith and obedience.

But let us see what this is to Stephen's case.

1. They had charged him as a blasphemer of God, and an apostate from the church; therefore he shews that he is a son of Abraham, and values himself upon his being able to say, *Our father Abraham*, and that he is a faithful worshipper of the God of Abraham, whom therefore he here calls the *God of glory*. He also shews, that he owns divine revelation, and that particularly by which the Jewish church was founded and incorporated.

2. They were proud of their being circumcised; and therefore he shews, that Abraham was taken under God's conduct, and into communion with him, before he was circumcised, for that was not till *ver. 8.* With this argument Paul proves, that Abraham was justified by faith, because he was justified when he was in uncircumcision; and so here,

3. They had a mighty jealousy for this *holy place*: which may be meant of the whole land of Canaan; for it was called the *holy land*, *Immanuel's land*; and the destruction of the *holy house*, inferred that of the *holy land*. Now, saith Stephen, you need not be so proud of it; for, 1. You came originally out of Ur of the Chaldees, where your fathers served other gods, *Josh. xxiv. 2.* and you were not the first planters of this country. *Look therefore unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit out of which ye were digged*; that is, as it follows there; *look unto Abraham your father, for I called him alone*, *Isa. li. 1, 2.* think of the meanness of your beginnings, and how you are intirely indebted to divine grace, and then you will see boasting to be for ever excluded. It was God that raised up the righteous man from the dust, and called him to his foot, *Isa. xli. 2.* But if his seed degenerate, let them know, God can destroy this holy place, and raise up to himself another people, for he is not a debtor to them. 2. God appeared in his glory to Abraham a great way off in Mesopotamia, before he came near Canaan, nay, before he dwelt in Charran; so that you must not think God's visits are tied to this land: No; he that brought the seed of the church from a country so far east, can, if he pleaseth, carry the fruit of it to another country as far west. 3. God made no haste to bring him into this land, but let him linger some years by the way: which shews that God has not his heart so much upon this land, as you have, neither is his honour, nor the happiness of his people, bound up in it. It is therefore neither blasphemy nor treason to say, it shall be destroyed.

Secondly, The unsettled state of Abraham and his seed for many ages after he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. God did indeed

promise that he would *give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him*, ver. 5. But, 1. As yet *he had no child*, nor any by Sarah for many years after. 2. He himself was but a stranger and a sojourner in that land, and God *gave him no inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on*; but there he was as in a *strange country*, where he was always upon the remove, and could call nothing his own. 3. His posterity did not come to the possession of it of a long time; *after four hundred years they shall come and serve me in this place*, and not till then, ver. 7. Nay, 4. They must undergo a great deal of hardship and difficulty before they shall be put into the possession of that land, they shall be *brought into bondage, and ill treated in a strange land*: And this, not as the punishment of any particular sin, as their wandering in the wilderness was, for we never find any such account given of their bondage in Egypt; but so God had appointed, and it must be. And *at the end of four hundred years, reckoning from the birth of Isaac, that nation to whom they shall be in bondage, will I judge, said God*. Now this teacheth us, 1. That *known unto God are all his works* beforehand. When Abraham had neither *inheritance nor heir*, yet he was told he should have *both*, the one a *land of promise*, and the other a *child of promise*; and therefore both had, and received by faith. 2. That God's promises, though they are slow, yet they are sure in the operation of them, they will be fulfilled in the season of them, though, perhaps, not so soon as we expect. 3. That though the people of God may be in distress and trouble for a time, yet God will at length both rescue them, and reckon with those that do oppress them; for, *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*.

But let us see how this serves Stephen's purpose.

1. The Jewish nation which they were so jealous for the honour of, was very inconsiderable in its beginnings; as their common father Abraham was fetched out of obscurity in *Ur of the Chaldees*, so their tribes, and the heads of them, were fetched out of servitude in Egypt, when they were the *fewest of all people*, Deut. vii. 7. And what needs so much ado, as if their ruin, when they bring it upon themselves by sin, must be the ruin of the world, and of all God's interest in it? No; he that brought them out of Egypt, can bring them into it again, as he threatened, Deut. xxviii. 68. and ye be no loser, while he can *cut of stones* raise up children unto Abraham.

2. The slow steps by which the promise made to Abraham advanced towards the performance, and the many seeming contradictions here taken notice of, plainly shews that it had a spiritual meaning, and that the land principally intended to be conveyed and secured by it, was the *better country, that is, the heavenly*; as the apostle shews from this very argument, that the patriarchs *sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country*; thence inferring, that *they looked for a city that had foundations*, Heb. xi. 9, 10. It was therefore no blasphemy to say, that *Jesus shall destroy this place*, when at the same time we say, that he shall lead us to the heavenly Canaan, and put us in possession of that, of which the earthly Canaan was but a type and figure.

Thirdly, The building up of the family of Abraham, with the entail of divine grace upon it, and the disposals of divine providence concerning it, which take up the rest of the book of Genesis.

1. God engaged to be a God to Abraham and to his seed; and, in token of that, appointed that he and his male seed should be circumcised, Gen. xvii. 9. He *gave him the covenant of circumcision*, i. e. that covenant which circumcision was the seal of; and accordingly, when Abraham had a son born he *circumcised him the eighth day*, ver. 8. by which he was both obliged by the divine law, and interested in the divine promise, for circumcision had reference to both, being a seal of the covenant both on God's part, I will be to thee a *God all-sufficient*, and on man's part, *walk before me and be thou perfect*. And then when effectual care was thus taken for the securing of Abraham's seed, to be a *seed to serve the Lord*, they began to multiply; *Isaac begat Jacob*, and *Jacob the twelve patriarchs*, or roots of the respective tribes.

2. Joseph the darling and blessing of his father's house was abused by his brethren, they *envied him* because of his dreams, and *sold him into Egypt*; thus early did the children of Israel begin to grudge those among them that were eminent, and outshone others, of which their enmity to Christ, who, like Joseph, was a *Nazarite among his brethren*, was a great instance.

3. God owned Joseph in his troubles, and was with him, Gen. xxxiv. 2, 21. by the influence of his Spirit, both on his mind, giving him comfort, and on the minds of those he was concerned with, giving him favour in their eyes. And thus at length he *delivered him out of his afflictions*, and Pharaoh made him the second man in the kingdom, *Psalm* cv. 20, 21, 22. And thus he not only arrived to great preferment among the Egyptians, but became the *father and prince of Israel*, Gen. xlv. 24.

4. Jacob was compelled to go down into Egypt, by a famine which *terred him out of Canaan*, a dearth which was a *great affliction* to that degree, that *our fathers found no sustenance in Canaan*, ver. 9. That *fruitful land was turned into barrenness*: But hearing that there was *corn in Egypt*, treasured up by the wisdom of his own son, he *sent out our fathers first to fetch corn*, ver. 12. And the *second time* that they went, Joseph, who at first made himself strange to them, made himself known to them; and it was notified to Pha-

raoh that they were Joseph's kindred, and had a dependence upon him, ver. 13. whereupon with Pharaoh's leave, *Joseph sent for his Father Jacob to him into Egypt*, with *all his kindred and family*, to the number of seventy five souls, to be subsisted there, ver. 14. In Genesis they are said to be seventy souls, Gen. xlv. 27. But the Septuagint there make them seventy five, and Stephen or Luke follow that version, as *Luke* iii. 36. where Cainan is inserted, that is not in the *Hebrew* text, but in the Septuagint. Some by excluding Joseph and his sons, who were in Egypt before, which reduceth the number to sixty four, and adding the sons of the eleven patriarchs, make the number seventy five.

5. Jacob and his sons died in Egypt, ver. 16. But were carried over to be buried in Canaan, ver. 17. A very considerable difficulty occurs here; it is said *they were carried over into Sychem*, whereas Jacob was buried not in Sychem, but near Hebron, in the cave of Macpelah where Abraham and Isaac were buried, Gen. i. 13. Joseph's bones indeed were buried in Sychem, *Josh.* xxiv. 32. and it seems by this (though it is not mentioned in the story) that the bones of all the other patriarchs were carried with his, each of them giving the same commandment concerning them that he had done; and of them this must be understood, not of Jacob himself. But then that sepulchre in Sychem was bought by Jacob, Gen. xxxiii. 19. and by that it is described, *Josh.* xxiv. 32. How then is it here said to be bought by Abraham? Dr. Whitby's solution of this is very sufficient; he supplies it thus; *Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers*; and *(our fathers) were carried over into Sychem*; and he, i. e. *Jacob* was laid in the sepulchre that *Abraham bought for a sum of money*, Gen. xxiii. (Or, they were laid there, i. e. *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*) And they, viz. the other patriarchs, were *buried in the sepulchre bought of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem*.

Let us now see what this is to Stephen's purpose.

1. He still minds them of the *mean beginning* of the Jewish nation, as a check to their priding of themselves in the glories of that nation; and that it was by a miracle of mercy, that they were raised up out of nothing to what they were, from so small a number to be so great a nation; but if they answer not the intention of their being so raised, they can expect no other but to be destroyed. The prophets frequently put them in mind of the bringing of them out of Egypt, as an aggravation of their contempt of the law of God, and here it is urged upon them as an aggravation of their contempt of the gospel of Christ.

2. He minds them likewise of the wickedness of those that were the patriarchs of their tribes, in envying their brother Joseph, and selling him into Egypt; and the same spirit was still working in them towards Christ and his ministers.

3. Their holy land they doted so much upon, their fathers were long kept out of the possession of, and met with *dearth and great affliction* in it; and therefore let them not think it strange, if after it has been so long polluted with sin, it be at length destroyed.

4. The faith of the patriarchs in desiring to be buried in the land of Canaan, plainly shewed that they had an eye to the heavenly country, which it was the design of this Jesus to lead them to.

17. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18. Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. 20. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his fathers house three months: 21. And when he was cast out, Pharaohs daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. 22. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25. For he supposed his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. 26. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another? 27. But he that did his neighbour wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28. Wilt thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? 29. Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

Stephen here goes on to relate,

First, The wonderful increase of the people of Israel in Egypt; it was by a wonder of providence, that, in a little time, they advanced from a family into a nation.

1. It was *when the time of the promise drew nigh; the time when they were to be formed into a people.* During the first two hundred and fifteen years, after the promise made to Abraham, the children of the covenant were increased but to seventy, but in the latter two hundred and fifteen years they increased to six hundred thousand fighting men; the motion of providence is sometimes quickest, when it comes nearest the centre: Let not us be discouraged at the slowness of the proceedings towards the accomplishment of God's promises, God knows how to *redeem the time* that seems to have been lost; and, *when the year of the redeemed is at hand*, can do a double work in a single day.

2. It was in Egypt, where they were oppressed, and ruled with rigour; when their lives were made so bitter to them, that, one would think, they should have wished to be written childless; yet they married in faith, that God, in due time, would visit them; and God blessed them, who thus honoured him, saying, *Be fruitful, and multiply.* Suffering times have oft been growing times with the church.

Secondly, The extream hardships which they underwent there, ver. 18, 19. When the Egyptians observed them to increase in number, they increased their burthens; in which Stephen observes three things:

1. Their base ingratitude: They were oppressed by another king that knew not Joseph, i. e. did not consider the good service that Joseph had done to that nation; for, if he had, he would not have made so ill a requital to his relations and family. Those that injure good people are very ungrateful, for they are the blessings of the age and place they live in.

2. Their hellish craft and policy: *They dealt subtilly with our kindred.* Come on, said they, let us deal wisely, thinking thereby to secure themselves, but it proved dealing foolishly, for they did but treasure up wrath by it. Those are in a great mistake, who think they deal subtilly for themselves, when they deal deceitfully or unmercifully with their brethren.

3. Their barbarous and inhuman cruelty: That they might effectually extirpate them, they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. The killing of their infant seed seemed a very likely way to crush an infant nation.

Now Stephen seems to observe this to them, not only that they might further see how mean their beginnings were, fitly represented (perhaps, with an eye to the exposing of the young children in Egypt) by the forlorn state of a helpless, out-cast infant, Ezek. xvi. 4. and how much they were indebted to God for his care of them, which they had forfeited, and made themselves unworthy of, but also that they might consider that what they were now doing against the Christian church in its infancy was as impious and unjust, and would be, in the issue, as fruitless and ineffectual, as that was which the Egyptians did against the Jewish church in its infancy: You think you deal subtilly in your evil intreating us, and, in persecuting young converts, you do as they did in casting out the young children, but you will find it is to no purpose, in spite of your malice, Christ's disciples will increase and multiply.

Thirdly, The raising up of Moses to be their deliverer. Stephen was charged with having spoken blasphemous words against Moses, in answer to which charge, he here speaks very honourably of him.

1. Moses was born when the persecution of Israel was at the hottest, especially in that most cruel instance of it, the murdering of the new-born children: *At that time Moses was born*, ver. 20. and was himself in danger, as soon as he came into the world (as our Saviour also was at Bethlehem) of falling a sacrifice to that bloody edict. God is preparing for his peoples deliverance, then when their day is darkest, and their distress deepest.

2. He was exceeding fair; his face began to shine as soon as he was born, as a happy preface of the honour God designed to put upon him; he was, *ἀσῆτος τῷ Θεῷ*, fair towards God; he was sanctified from the womb and that made him beautiful in God's eyes; for it is the beauty of holiness that is in God's sight of great price.

3. He was wonderfully preserved in his infancy, first, by the care of his tender parents, who nourished him three months in their own house, as long as they durst; and then by a favourable providence that threw him into the arms of Pharaoh's daughter, who took him up, and nourished him for her own son, ver. 21. For those whom God designs to make special use of, he will take special care of. And did he thus protect the child Moses? much more will he secure the interests of his holy child Jesus (as he is called, chap. iv. 27.) from the enemies that are gathered together against him.

4. He became a great scholar, ver. 22. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, who were then famed for all manner of polite literature, particularly philosophy, astronomy, and (which, perhaps, helped to lead them to idolatry) hieroglyphicks. Moses, having his education at court, had opportunity of improving himself by the best books, tutors, and conversation, in all the arts and sciences, and had a genius for them: Only we have reason to think, that he had not so far forgotten the God of his fathers, as to acquaint himself with the unlawful studies and practices of the magicians of Egypt, any further than was necessary to the confuting of them.

5. He became a prime minister of state in Egypt; that seems to be meant by his being mighty in words and deeds. Though he had not a ready way of expressing himself, but stammered, yet he spoke admirable good sense, and every thing he said commanded assent, and carried its own evidence and force of reason along with it: And, in business, none went on with such courage, and conduct, and success. Thus was he prepared, by human helps, for these services, which, after all, he could not be thoroughly furnished for without divine illumination. Now, by all this, Stephen will make it appear, that, notwithstanding the malicious insinuations of his persecutors, he had as high and honourable thoughts of Moses as they had.

Fourthly, The attempts which Moses made to deliver Israel, which they kicked at, and would not close in with. This Stephen insists much upon, and it serves for a key to this story, Exod. ii. 11, — 15. as doth also that other construction which is put upon it by the apostle, Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. There it is represented as an act of holy self-denial, here as a designed prelude to, or entrance upon the publick service he was to be called out to, ver. 23. *When he was full forty years old*, in the prime of his time for preferment in the court of Egypt, it came into his heart (for God put it there) to visit his brethren, the children of Israel, and to see which way he might do them any service; and he shewed himself as a publick person, with a publick character:

1. As Israel's saviour: This he gave a specimen of, in avenging an oppressed Israelite, and killing the Egyptian that abused him, ver. 24. Seeing one of his brethren suffer wrong, he was moved with compassion towards the sufferer, and a just indignation at the wrong-doer, as men in publick stations should be, and he avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian, which, if he had been only a private person, he could not lawfully have done; but he knew that his commission from heaven would bear him out; and he supposed that his brethren (who could not but have some knowledge of the promise made to Abraham, that the nation that should oppress them God would judge) would have understood, that God by his hand would deliver them; for he could not have had, either presence of mind, or strength of body, to do what he did, if he had not been clothed with such a divine power as evidenced a divine authority: If they had but understood the sign of the times, they might have taken this for the dawning of the day of their deliverance, but they understood not; they did not take this, as it was designed, for the setting up of a standard, and sounding of a trumpet to proclaim Moses their deliverer.

2. As Israel's judge: This he gave a specimen of, the very next day, in offering to accommodate matters between two contending Hebrews, wherein he plainly assumed a publick character, ver. 26. He shewed himself to them as they strove, and, putting on an air of majesty and authority, he would have set them at one again, and, as their prince, have determined the controversy between them, saying, *Sirs, ye are brethren*, by birth, and profession of religion; *why do ye wrong one to another?* for he observed that (as in most strifes) there was a fault on both sides; and therefore, in order to peace and friendship, there must be a mutual remission and condescension. When Moses was to be Israel's deliverer out of Egypt, he slew the Egyptians, and so delivered Israel out of their hands; but when he was to be Israel's judge, and lawgiver, he ruled them with the golden sceptre, not the iron rod; he did not kill and slay them when they strove, but gave them excellent laws and statutes, and determined upon their complaints and appeals made to him, Exod. xviii. 16.

But the contending Israelite, that was most in the wrong, thrust him away, ver. 27. would not bear the reproof, though a just and gentle one, but was ready to fly in his face, with, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?* Proud and litigious spirits are impatient of check and controul: Rather would these Israelites have their bodies ruled with rigour by their task-masters, than be delivered, and have their minds ruled with reason, by their deliverer: The wrong-doer was so enraged at the reproof given him, that he upbraided Moses with the service he had done to their nation in killing the Egyptian, which, if they had pleased, would have been the earnest of further and greater service: *Wilt thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?* ver. 28. charging that upon him as his crime, and threatening to accuse him for it, which was the hanging out of the flag of defiance to the Egyptians, and the banner of love and deliverance to Israel. Hereupon Moses fled into the land of Midian, and made no more attempt to deliver Israel till forty years after; he settled as a stranger in Midian, married, and had two sons, by Jethro's daughter, ver. 29.

Now let us see how this serves Stephen's purpose.

1. They charged him with blaspheming Moses, in answer to which he retorts upon them the indignities which their fathers did to Moses, which they ought to be ashamed of, and humbled for, instead of picking quarrels thus, under pretence of zeal for the honour of Moses, with one that had as great a veneration for him as any of them had.

2. They persecuted him for disputing in defence of Christ, and his gospel, in opposition to which they set up Moses, and his law; but (saith he) you had best take heed, 1. Lest you hereby do as your fathers did, refuse and reject one, whom God has raised up to be to you a Prince, and a Saviour; you may understand, if you will

will not wilfully shut your eyes against the light, that God will, by this Jesus, deliver you out of a worse slavery than that in Egypt; take heed then of thrusting him away, but receive him as a ruler and a judge over you. 2. Lest you hereby fare as your fathers fared, who, for this, were justly left to die in their slavery, for the deliverance came not till forty years after; this will come of it, you put away the gospel from you, and it will be sent to the Gentiles; you will not have Christ, and you shall not have him, so shall your doom be, *Matt. xxiii. 38, 39.*

30. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. 31. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32. Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. 45. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler, and a deliverer, by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37. ¶ This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. 38. This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us. 39. To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 41. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

Stephen here proceeds in his story of Moses; and let any one judge, whether these be the words of one that was a blasphemer of Moses; no; nothing could be spoken more honourable of him. Here is,

First, The vision which he saw of the glory of God at the bush, *ver. 30. When forty years were expired*, during all which time Moses was buried alive in Madian, and was now grown old, and, one would think, past service, that it might appear that all his performances were products of a divine power and promise, as it appeared that Isaac was a child of promise, by his being born of parents stricken in years; now, at eighty years old, he enters upon that post of honour to which he was born, in recompence for his self-denial at forty years old. Observe,

1. Where God appeared to him; *In the wilderness of mount Sinai, ver. 30.* And when he appeared to him there, that was *holy ground, ver. 33.* which Stephen takes notice of, as a check to those who prided themselves in the temple, that holy place; as if there were no communion to be had with God but there; whereas God met Moses, and manifested himself to him, in a remote, obscure place in the wilderness of Sinai. They deceive themselves, if they think God is tied to places; he can bring his people into a wilderness, and there speak comfortably to them.

2. How he appeared to him; *In a flame of fire; for our God is a consuming fire; and yet the bush, in which this fire was, though combustible matter, was not consumed; which, as it represented the state of Israel in Egypt, where, though they were in the fire of affliction, yet they were not consumed; so, perhaps, may be looked upon as a type of Christ's incarnation, and the union between the divine and human nature; God, manifested in the flesh, was as the flame of fire, manifested in the bush.*

3. How Moses was affected with this; 1. *He wondered at the sight, ver. 31.* It was a phenomenon which all his Egyptian learning could not furnish him with the solution of: He had the curiosity at first to pry into it, *I will turn aside now, and see this great sight; but the nearer he drew, the more he was struck with amazement; and, 2. He trembled, and durst not behold; durst not look wisely upon it; for he was soon aware that it was not a fiery meteor, but the angel of the Lord; and no other but the angel of the covenant, the Son of God himself: This set him on trembling.* Stephen was accused for blaspheming Moses, and God, *chap. vi. 11.* as if Moses had been a little god; but, by this it appears, he

was a man subject to like passions as we are; and particularly that of fear, upon any appearance of the Divine Majesty and Glory.

Secondly, The declaration which he heard of the covenant of God, *ver. 32. The voice of the Lord came to him; for faith comes by hearing; and this was it; I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and therefore, 1. I am the same that I was: The covenant God made with Abraham some ages ago, was, I will be to thee a God, a God all-sufficient: Now, saith God, that covenant is still in full force; it is not cancelled, or forgotten, but I am; as I was, the God of Abraham, and now I will make it to appear so; for all the favours, all the honours God put upon Israel, were founded upon this covenant with Abraham, and flowed from it. 2. I will be the same that I am: For if the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cannot break the covenant relation between God and them (as by this it appears it could not) then nothing else can: And then he will be a God,*

1. To their souls, which are now separated from their bodies. Our Saviour by this proves the future state, *Matt. xxii. 31. Abraham is dead, and yet God is still his God; therefore Abraham is still alive: God never did that for him in this world, which would answer the true intent and full extent of that promise, that he would be the God of Abraham; and therefore it must be done for him in the other world. Now this is that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel, for the full conviction of the Sadducees, who denied it. Those therefore who stood up in defence of the gospel, and endeavoured to propagate that, were so far from blaspheming Moses, that they did the greatest honour imaginable to Moses, and that glorious discovery which God made of himself to him at the bush.*

2. To their seed; God, in declaring himself thus the God of their fathers, intimated his kindness to their seed, that they should be loved for the fathers sakes, *Rom. xi. 28. Deut. vii. 8.* Now the preachers of the gospel preached up this covenant, the promise made of God unto the fathers; unto which promise, those of the twelve tribes, that did continue serving God, hoped to come, *Acts xxvi. 6, 7.* And shall they, under colour of supporting the holy place, and the law, oppose the covenant which was made with Abraham, and his seed, his spiritual seed, before the law was given, and long before the holy place was built? Since God's glory must be for ever advanced, and our glorying for ever silenced, God will have our salvation to be by promise, and not by the law; the Jews therefore, who persecuted the Christians, under pretence that they blasphemed the law, did themselves blaspheme the promise, and forsook all their own mercies that were contained in it.

Thirdly, The commission which God gave him to deliver Israel out of Egypt. The Jews set up Moses in competition with Christ, and accused Stephen as a blasphemer, because he did not do so too: But Stephen here shews, that Moses was an eminent type of Christ, as he was Israel's deliverer. When God had declared himself the God of Abraham, he proceeded,

1. To order Moses into a reverent posture; *Put off thy shoes from thy feet: Enter not upon sacred things with low, and cold, and common thoughts: Keep thy foot, Eccles. v. 1. be not hasty and rash in thy approaches; tread softly.*

2. To order Moses into a very eminent service: When he is ready to receive commands, he shall have commission: He is commissioned to demand leave from Pharaoh for Israel to go out of his land, and to enforce that demand, *ver. 34. Observe, 1. The notice God took both of their sufferings, and of their sense of their sufferings: I have seen, I have seen their affliction, and have heard their groaning. God has a compassionate regard to the troubles of his church, and the groans of his persecuted people; and their deliverance takes rise from his pity. 2. The determination he fixed to redeem them by the hand of Moses; I am come down to deliver them. It should seem, though God is present in all places, yet he useth that expression here, of coming down to deliver them, because that deliverance was typical of what Christ did, when, for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven; he that ascended, first descended; Moses is the man that must be employed; Come, and I will send thee into Egypt; and if God send him, he will own him, and give him success.*

Fourthly, His acting in pursuance of this commission, wherein he was a figure of the Messiah. And Stephen takes notice here again of the slights they had put upon him, the affronts they had given him, and their refusal to have him to reign over them, as tending very much to magnify his agency in their deliverance.

1. God put honour upon him, whom they put contempt upon, *ver. 35. This Moses whom they refused, whose kind offers, and good offices they rejected with scorn, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? Thou takest too much upon thee, thou son of Levi, Numb. xvi. 3. That same Moses did God send to be a ruler, and a deliverer, by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush: It may be understood, either that God sent to him by the hand of the angel; or, that by the hand of the angel going along with him, he became a compleat deliverer. Now, by this example, Stephen would intimate to the council, That this Jesus whom they now refused, as their fathers did Moses, saying, Who made thee a prophet and a king? Who gave thee this authority? even this same has God advanced to be a Prince and a Saviour, a ruler*

ruler and a deliverer; as the apostles had told them a while ago, chap. v. 30. that the stone which the builders refused, was become the head stone in the corner, chap. iv. 11.

2. God shewed favour to them by him, and he was very forward to serve them, though they had thrust him away. God might justly have refused them his service, and he might justly have declined it; but it is all forgotten, they are not so much as upbraided with it, ver. 36. He brought them out, notwithstanding, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt; which were afterwards continued for the compleating their deliverance, according as the case called for it, in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. So far is he from blaspheming Moses, that he admires him as a glorious instrument in the hand of God, for the forming of the Old Testament church! But it doth not at all derogate from his just honour to say, that he was but an instrument, and that he is outshone by this Jesus, whom he encourageth these Jews yet to close with, and to come into his interest, not fearing but that then they should be received into his favour, and receive benefit by him, as the people of Israel were delivered by Moses, though they had once refused him.

Fifthly, His prophecy of Christ, and his grace, ver. 37. He not only was a type of Christ, many were so that, perhaps, had not an actual foresight of his day, but Moses spoke of him, ver. 37. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren. This is spoken of as one of the greatest honours God put upon him, nay, as that which exceeded all the rest, that by him he gave notice to the children of Israel of the great Prophet that should come into the world, raised their expectation of him, and obliged them to receive him. When his bringing of them out of Egypt is spoken of, it is with an emphasis of honour, This is that Moses! Exod. vi. 26. and so it is here, This is that Moses! Now this is very full to Stephen's purpose; in asserting that Jesus should change the customs of the ceremonial law, he was so far from blaspheming Moses, that really he did him the greatest honour imaginable, by shewing how the prophecy of Moses was accomplished, which was so clear, that, as Christ told them himself, If they had believed Moses, they would have believed him, John v. 46.

1. Moses, in God's name, told them, that, in the fulness of time, they should have a prophet raised up among them, one of their own nation, that should be like unto him, xviii. 15, 18. a ruler and a deliverer, a judge and a lawgiver, like him; who should therefore have authority to change the customs that he had delivered, and to bring in a better hope, as the mediator of a better testament.

2. He charged them to hear that prophet, to receive his dictates, to admit the change he would make in the customs, and to submit to him in every thing; and this will be the greatest honour you can do to Moses, and to his law, who said, Hear ye him; and came to be a witness to the repetition of this charge, by a voice from heaven, at the transfiguration of Christ, and, by his silence, he gave consent to it, Matt. xvii. 5.

Sixthly, The eminent services which Moses continued to do to the people of Israel, after he had been instrumental to bring them out of Egypt, ver. 38. And herein also he was a type of Christ, who yet so far exceeds him, that it is no blasphemy to say, he has authority to change the customs that Moses delivered. It was the honour of Moses,

1. That he was in the church in the wilderness; he presided in all the affairs of it for forty years; was king in Jeshurun, Deut. xxxiii. 5. The camp of Israel is here called the church in the wilderness; for it was a sacred society, incorporated by a divine charter, under a divine government, and blessed with divine revelation: The church in the wilderness was a church, though it was yet not perfectly formed, as it was to be when they came to Canaan, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes, Deut. xii. 8, 9. It was the honour of Moses that he was in that church, and many a time it had been destroyed, if Moses had not been in it to intercede for it: But Christ is the president and guide of a more excellent and glorious church than that in the wilderness was, and is more in it, as the life and soul of it, than Moses could be in that.

2. That he was with the angel that spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers; was with him in the holy mount twice forty days, with the angel of the covenant, Michael, our prince. Moses was immediately conversant with God, but never lay in his bosom, as Christ did from eternity. Or these words may be taken thus; Moses was in the church in the wilderness, but it was with the angel that spake to him in mount Sinai, that is, at the burning bush; for that was said to be at mount Sinai, ver. 30. that angel went before him, and was guide to him, else he could not have been a guide to Israel; of this God speaks, Exod. xxiii. 20. I send an angel before thee, and Exod. xxxiii. 2. and see Numb. xx. 16. He was in the church with the angel, without whom he could have done no service to the church; but Christ is himself that angel, which was with the church in the wilderness, and therefore has an authority above Moses.

3. That he received the lively oracles to give unto them; not only the ten commandments, but the other instructions which the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak them to the children of Israel.

1. The words of God are oracles, certain and infallible, and of unquestionable authority and obligation; they are to be consulted as oracles, and by them all controversies must be determined. 2. They are lively oracles, for they are the oracles of the living God, not of the dumb and dead idols of the heathens; the word that God speaks, is spirit and life; not that the law of Moses could give life, but it shewed the way to life; If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. 3. Moses received them from God, and delivered nothing as an oracle to the people, but what he had first received from God. 4. The lively oracles which he received from God, he faithfully gave to the people, to be observed and preserved. It was the principal privilege of the Jews, that to them were committed the oracles of God: And it was by the hand of Moses that they were committed. As Moses gave them not that bread, so neither did he give them that law from heaven, John vi. 32. but God gave it them; and he that gave them those customs by his servant Moses, might, no doubt, when he pleased, change the customs by his Son Jesus, who has received more lively oracles to give unto us, than Moses did.

Seventhly, The contempt that was after this, and, notwithstanding this, put upon him by the people: They that charged Stephen with speaking against Moses, would do well to answer what their own ancestors had done, and they tread in their steps.

1. They would not obey him, but thrust him from them, ver. 35. They murmured at him, mutinied against him, refused to obey his orders, and sometimes were ready to stone him. Moses did indeed give them an excellent law, but by this it appeared that it could not make the comers thereunto perfect, Heb. x. 1. for in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt, and preferred their garlick and onions there, before the manna they had under the conduct of Moses, or the milk and honey they hoped for in Canaan. Observe, Their secret disaffection to Moses, and inclination to Egyptianism (if I may so call it) was, in effect, turning back to Egypt; it was doing it in heart; many that pretend to be going forwards towards Canaan, by keeping up a shew and profession of religion, yet, at the same time, are in their hearts turning back to Egypt, like Lot's wife to Sodom, and will be dealt with as deserters, for it is the heart that God looks at. Now if the customs that Moses delivered to them could not prevail to change them, wonder not that Christ comes to change the customs, and to introduce a more spiritual way of worship.

2. They made a golden calf instead of him, which, besides the affront that was thereby done to God, was a great indignity to Moses; for it was upon this consideration that they made the calf, because, as for this Moses, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him; therefore make us gods of gold; as if a calf were sufficient to supply the want of Moses, and as capable of going before them into the promised land. So they made a calf in those days, when the law was given them, and offered sacrifices unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands: So proud were they of their new god, that when they had sitten down to eat and drink, they rose up to play! By all this it appears, there was a great deal which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; it was therefore necessary that this law should be perfected by a better hand, and he was no blasphemer against Moses, who said Christ had done it.

42. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts, and sacrifices, by the space of forty years in the wilderness? 43. Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made, to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. 44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45. Which also our fathers that came after, brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David. 46. Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47. But Solomon built him an house. 48. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 49. Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? 50. Hath not my hand made all these things?

Two things we have in these verses:

First, Stephen upbraids them with the idolatry of their fathers, which God gave them up to, as a punishment for their early forsaking him in worshipping the golden calf; and this was the saddest punishment of all for that sin, as it was of the idolatry of the Gentile world, that God gave them up to a reprobate sense. When Israel was joined to idols, joined to the golden calf, and, not long after, to Baal-peor, God said, Let them alone; let them go on,

ver. 42. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven. He particularly cautioned them not to do it at their peril, and gave them reasons why they should not; but when they were bent upon it, he gave them up to their own hearts lust, withdrew his restraining grace, and then they walked in their own counsels, and were so scandalously mad upon their idols, as never any people were. Compare Deut. iv. 19. with Jer. viii. 2.

For this he quotes a passage out of Amos v. 25. for it would be left invidious to tell them their own from an Old Testament prophet, who upbraids them,

1. For not sacrificing to their own God in the wilderness, ver. 42. Have ye offered to me slain beasts, and sacrifices, by the space of forty years in the wilderness? No; during all that time it was intermitted; they did not so much as keep the passover after the second year: It was God's condescension to them, that he did not insist upon it during their unsettled state; but then let them consider how ill they requited him, in offering sacrifices to idols, when God dispensed with their offering to him. This is also a check to their zeal for the customs that Moses delivered to them, and their fear of having them changed by this Jesus, that immediately after they were delivered, they were for forty years together refused as needless things.

2. For sacrificing to other gods after they came to Canaan, ver. 43. Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch. Moloch was the idol of the children of Ammon, to which they barbarously offered their own children in sacrifice, which they could not do without great terror and grief to themselves and their families, yet this unnatural idolatry they arrived to, when God gave them up to worship the host of heaven: See 2 Chron. xxviii. 3. It was surely the strongest delusion that ever people were given up to, and the greatest instance of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and therefore it is here spoken of emphatically, *Yea, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch*, you submitted even to that, and to the worship of the star of your god Remphan; some think, it signifies the moon, as Moloch doth the sun; others take it for Saturn, for that planet is called Remphan, in the Syriack and Persian languages: The Septuagint puts it for Chion, as being a name more commonly known. They had images representing the star, like the silver shrines for Diana, here called the figures which they made to worship. Dr. Lightfoot thinks they had figures representing the whole starry firmament, with all the constellations, and the planets, and these are called Remphan, the high representation, like the celestial globe. A poor thing to make an idol of, and yet better than a golden calf!

Now for this it is threatened, *I will carry you away beyond Babylon*. In Amos it is beyond Damascus, meaning to Babylon, the land of the north. But Stephen changes it, with an eye to the captivity of the ten tribes, who were carried away beyond Babylon, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 2 Kings xvii. 6. Let it not therefore seem strange to them, to hear of the destruction of this place, for they had heard of it many a time from the prophets of the Old Testament, who were not therefore accused as blasphemers by any but the wicked rulers. It was observed, in the debate on Jeremiah's case, that Micah was not called to an account, though he prophesied, saying, *Zion shall be ploughed as a field*, Jer. xxvii. 18, 19.

Secondly, He gives an answer particularly to the charge exhibited against him relating to the temple, that he spoke blasphemous words against that holy place, ver. 44,—50. He was accused for saying that Jesus would destroy this holy place; and what if I did say so? saith Stephen; the glory of the holy God is not bound up in the glory of this holy place, but that may be preserved untouched, though this be laid in the dust; for,

1. It was not till our fathers came into the wilderness, in their way to Canaan, that they had any fixed place of worship, and yet the patriarchs many ages before worshipped God acceptably at the altars they had adjoining to their own tents in the open air, *sub dio*; and he that was worshipped without any holy place, in the first, and best, and purest ages of the Old Testament church, may, and will be so, when this holy place is destroyed, without any diminution to his glory.

2. The holy place was at first but a tabernacle, mean and moveable, and speaking itself to be short lived, and not designed to continue always. Why might not this holy place, though built of stones, be decently brought to its end, and give place to its betters, as well as that though framed of curtains? As it was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple; so it is now that the material temple gives way to the spiritual one, and so it will be, when, at last, the spiritual temple shall give way to the eternal one.

3. That tabernacle was a tabernacle of witness, or of testimony, a figure for the time then present, Heb. ix. 9. a figure of good things to come, of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not men, Heb. viii. 2. This was the glory, both of the tabernacle and temple, that they were erected for a testimony of that temple of God, which, in the latter days, should be opened in heaven, Rev. xi. 19. and of Christ's tabernacling it on earth (as the word is, John i. 14, and of the temple of his body.

4. That tabernacle was framed just as God appointed, and according to the fashion which Moses saw in the mount; which plainly

intimates, that it had reference to good things to come; its rise being heavenly, its meaning and tendency was so; and therefore it was no diminution at all to its glory, to say, that this temple made with hands should be destroyed, in order to the building of another made without hands; which was Christ's crime, Mark xiv. 58. and Stephen's.

5. That tabernacle was pitched first in the wilderness; it was not a native of this land of yours, to which you think it must for ever be confined, but was brought in in the next age, by our fathers, that came after those who first erected it, into the possession of the Gentiles, into the land of Canaan, which had long been in the possession of the devoted nations, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers: And why may not God set up his spiritual temple, as he had done the material tabernacle, in those countries that were now the possession of the Gentiles? That tabernacle was brought in by those who came with Jesus, i. e. Joshua: And I think, for distinction sake, and to prevent mistakes, it ought to be so read, both here and Heb. iv. 8. yet, in naming Joshua here; which, in Greek, is Jesus, there may be a tacit intimation, that as the Old Testament Joshua brought in that typical tabernacle, so the New Testament Joshua should bring in the true tabernacle into the possession of the Gentiles.

6. That tabernacle continued for many ages, even to the days of David, above four hundred years, before there was any thought of building a temple, ver. 45. David having found favour before God, did indeed desire this further favour to have leave to build God a house, to be a constant, settled tabernacle, or dwelling-place, for the Shechinah, or the tokens of the presence of the God of Jacob, ver. 46. Those who have found favour with God, should shew themselves forward to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

7. God had his heart so little upon a temple, or such a holy place as they were so jealous for, that, when David desired to build one, he was forbidden to do it; God was in no haste for one, as he told David, 2 Sam. vii. 7. and therefore it was not he, but his son Solomon, some years after, that built him a house: David had all that sweet communion with God in public worship, which we read of in his psalms, before there was any temple built.

8. God often declared that temples made with hands were not his delight, nor could add any thing to the perfection of his rest and joy. Solomon, when he dedicated the temple, acknowledged that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; he has not need of them, is not benefited by them, cannot be confined to them: The whole world is his temple, in which he is every where present, and fills it with his glory; and what occasion has he for a temple then to manifest himself in? Indeed the pretended deities of the heathen needed temples made with hands, for they were gods made with hands, ver. 41. and had no other place to manifest themselves in but in their own temples; but the one only true and living God needs no temple, for the heaven is his throne, in which he rests, and the earth is his footstool, over which he rules, ver. 49, 50. and therefore, *What house will ye build me*, comparable to this which I have already? Or what is the place of my rest? What need I a house, either to repose myself in, or to shew myself? Hath not my hand made all these things? And these shew his eternal power and Godhead, Rom. i. 24. they shew themselves so to all mankind, that they are without excuse, who worship other gods. And as the world is thus God's temple wherein he is manifested, so it is God's temple in which he will be worshipped. As the earth is full of his glory, and is therefore his temple, Isa. vi. 3. so the earth is, or shall be, full of his praise, Hab. ii. 3. and all the ends of the earth shall fear him, Psalm lxvii. 7. and, upon that account, it is his temple: It was therefore no reflexion at all upon this holy place, however they might take it, to say that Jesus shall destroy this temple, and set up another, into which all nations shall be admitted, Acts xv. 16, 17. And it would not seem strange to them, who considered that scripture which Stephen here quotes, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, 3. which, as it spoke God's comparative contempt of the external part of his service, so it plainly foretold the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, and the welcome of the Gentiles into the church, that were of a contrite spirit.

51. ¶ Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53. Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Stephen was going on in his discourse (as it should seem by the thread of it) to shew that, as the temple, so the temple service must come to an end, and it would be the glory of both, to give way to that worship of the Father in Spirit and in truth, which was to be established in the kingdom of Messiah, stripped of the pompous ceremonies of the old law; and so was going to apply all this which he had said more closely to his present purpose; but he perceived they could not bear it; they could patiently hear the history

of the Old Testament told, it was a piece of learning which they themselves dealt much in, but if Stephen go about to tell them that their power and tyranny must come down, and that the church must be governed by a spirit of holiness and love, and heavenly mindedness, they will not so much as give him the hearing. It is probable he perceived this, and that they were going to silence him; and therefore he breaks off abruptly in the midst of his discourse, and by that spirit of wisdom, courage, and power wherewith he was filled, he sharply rebuked his persecutors, and gave them their own; for if they will not admit the testimony of the gospel to them, it shall become a testimony against them.

First, They, like their fathers, were *stubborn and wilful*, and would not be wrought upon by the various methods God took to reclaim and reform them, *they were like their fathers*, inflexible both to the word of God and to his providences.

1. They were *stiff-necked*, (*ver. 51.*) and would not submit their necks to the sweet and easy yoke of God's government, nor draw in it, but were like *a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*; or, they would not bow their heads, no not to God himself, would not do obeisance to him, would not humble themselves before him; the *stiff neck* is the same with the *hard heart*, obstinate and contumacious, and that will not yield; the general character of the Jewish nation, *Exod. xxxii. 9.* in *xxxiii. 3, 5.* *xxxiv. 9.* *Deut. ix. 6, 13.* *xxxix. 27.* *Ezek. ii. 4.*

2. They were *uncircumcised in heart and ear*; their hearts and ears were not devoted and given up to God, as the body of the people were in profession by the sign of circumcision; in name and shew you are circumcised Jews, but in heart and ears you are still uncircumcised heathens, and pay no more deference to the authority of your God than they do, *Jer. ix. 26.* you are under the power of unmortified lusts and corruptions which *stop your ears* to the voice of God, and *harden your hearts* to that which is both most commanding and most affecting. They had not that *circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.* *Col. ii. 11.*

Secondly, They, like their fathers, were not only not influenced by the methods God took to reform them, but they were *enraged and incensed* against them, *ye do always resist the holy Ghost.*

1. They resisted the holy Ghost speaking to them by the prophets, whom they opposed and contradicted, hated and ridiculed; this seems especially meant here, by the following explication, *which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* In persecuting and silencing them that spake by the inspiration of the holy Ghost, they resisted the holy Ghost. Their fathers resisted the holy Ghost in the prophets that God raised up to them, and so did they in Christ's apostles and ministers, who spake by the same Spirit, and had greater measures of his gifts than the prophets of the Old Testament had, and yet were more resisted.

2. They resisted the holy Ghost striving with them by their own consciences, and would not comply with the convictions and dictates of them. *God's Spirit strove* with them as with the old world, but in vain they resisted him, took part with their corruptions against their convictions, and rebelled against the light. There is that in our sinful hearts that *always resists the holy Ghost, a flesh that lusts against the spirit*, and wars against his motions; but in the hearts of God's elect, when the fulness of time comes, this resistance is overcome and overpowered, and after a struggle the throne of Christ is set up in the soul, and every thought that had *exalted itself* against it, is *brought into captivity* to it; *2 Cor. x. 4, 5.* That grace therefore which effects this change might more fitly be called victorious grace, than irresistible.

Thirdly, They, like their fathers, persecuted and slew those whom God sent unto them to call them to duty, and make them offers of mercy.

1. Their fathers had been the cruel and constant persecutors of the Old Testament prophets, *ver. 57.* *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* more or less, one time or other they had a blow at them all. Even those that lived in the best reigns, when the princes did not persecute them, yet there was a malignant party in the nation that mocked at them, and abused them, and most of them were at last, either by colour of law, or popular fury, put to death; and that which aggravated the sin of persecuting the prophets was that the business of the prophets they were so spiteful at, was to *shew before of the coming of the just One*; to give notice of God's kind intentions towards that people, to send the Messiah among them in the fulness of time. They that were the messengers of such glad tidings, should have been courted and caressed, and have had the preferments of the best of benefactors, but instead of that had the treatment of the worst of malefactors.

2. They had been the *betrayers and murderers of the just One* himself, as Peter had told them, *Acts iii. 24. v. 30.* They had hired Judas to betray him, and had in a manner forced Pilate to condemn him, and therefore it is charged upon them, that they were *his betrayers and murderers*. Thus they were the genuine seed of those who slew them that *foretold his coming*, which by slaying him, they shewed they would have done if they had lived then, and thus as our Saviour had told them, they brought upon themselves the guilt of the blood of *all the prophets*. Which of the prophets would they have shewed any respect to, that had no regard to the Son of God himself?

Fourthly, They, like their fathers, put contempt upon divine revelation, and would not be guided and governed by it; and this was the aggravation of their sin, that God had given, as to their fathers his law, so to them his gospel, in vain.

1. Their fathers *received the law, and have not kept it*, *ver. 53.* God wrote to them the *great things of his law*, after he had first spoken them to them, and yet they were *counted by them as a strange or foreign thing*, which they were no way concerned in. The law is said to be *received by the disposition of angels*, because angels were employed in the solemnity of giving the law; in the thundrings and lightnings, and the sound of the trumpet. It is said to be *ordained by angels*, *Gal. iii. 19.* And God is said to come *with ten thousand* of his saints to give the law, *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* And it was a *word spoken by angels*, *Heb. ii. 2.* This put an honour both upon the law, and the lawgiver, and should encrease our veneration for both. But they that thus received the law yet kept it not, but by making the golden calf broke it immediately in a capital instance.

2. They received the gospel now, not by the *disposition of angels*, but of the *holy Ghost*, not with the *sound of a trumpet*, but, which was more strange, in the *gifts of tongues*, and yet they did not embrace it. They would not yield to the plainest demonstrations, no more than their fathers before them did, for they were resolved not to comply with God, either in his law or in his gospel.

We have reason to think Stephen had a great deal more to say, and would have said it, if they would have suffered him, but they were wicked and unreasonable men, with whom he had to do, that could no more hear reason than they could speak it.

54. ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55. But he being full of the holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. 56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. 60. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

We have here the death of the first martyr of the Christian church, and there is in this story a lively instance of the outrage and fury of the persecutors, such as we may expect to meet with if we are called out to suffer for Christ; and of the courage and comfort of the persecuted that are thus called out. Here is hell in its fire and darkness, and heaven in its light and brightness; and these here serve as foils to set off each other. It is not here said, that the votes of the council were taken upon his case, and that, by the majority, he was found guilty, and then condemned, and ordered to be stoned to death, according to the law, as a blasphemer; but it is likely so it was, and that it was not by the violence of the people without order of the council that he was put to death; for here is the usual ceremony of regular executions, he was *cast out of the city, and the hands of the witnesses were first upon him.*

Let us observe here the wonderful discomposure of the spirits of his enemies and persecutors, and the wonderful composure of his spirit.

First, See the *strength of corruption* in the persecutors of Stephen; malice in perfection, hell itself broken loose, and men become incarnate devils! The serpent's seed spitting their venom.

1. *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart*, *ver. 54.* *διετέοντο*, the same word that is used, *Heb. xi. 37.* and translated, *they were sawn asunder*. They were put to as much torture in their minds, as ever the martyrs were put to in their bodies. They were filled with indignation at the unanswerable arguments that Stephen urged for their conviction, and that they could find nothing to say against them. They were not pricked to the heart with sorrow, as those were, *Acts ii. 37.* but *cut to the heart* with rage and fury, as they themselves were, *chap. v. 33.* Stephen rebuked them sharply, as Paul expresses it, *Tit. i. 13.* *σπρόγως*, cuttingly, for they were *cut to the heart*, by the reproof. Note, Rejecters of the gospel, and opposers of it, are really tormentors to themselves. Enmity to God is a heart-cutting thing; faith and love are heart-healing. When they heard how he that *looked like an angel*, before he began his discourse, talked like an angel, like a messenger from heaven, before he had done it, they were *like a wall built in a net, full of the fury of the Lord*, *Isa. li. 20.* despairing to run down a cause so bravely pleaded, and yet resolved not to yield to it.

2. They *gnashed upon him with their teeth*; this speaks, 1. Great malice and rage against him; Job complained of his enemy, that he *gnashed upon him with his teeth*, *Job xvi. 9.* The language of this was, *O that we had of his teeth to eat!* *Job xxxi. 31.* They *gnashed at him*, as dogs at those they are enraged at; and therefore Paul cautioning against those of the circumcision, *saith, beware*

dogs, Phil. iii. 2. Enmity at the saints, turns men into brute beasts. 3. Great vexation within themselves; they fretted to see in him such manifest tokens of a divine power and presence, and it vexed them to the heart. *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved, he shall gnash with his teeth and melt away*, Psal. cxii. 10. Gnashing of the teeth is often used to express the horror and torments of the damned. Those that have the *malice of hell*, cannot but have with it some of the *pains of hell*.

2. They *cried out with a loud voice*, ver. 50. To irritate and excite one another, and to drown the noise of the clamours of their own and one another's consciences; when he said, *he saw heaven opened, they cried with a loud voice*, that he might not be heard to speak. Note, It is very common for a righteous cause, particularly the righteous cause of Christ's religion, to be endeavoured to be run down by noise and clamour; what is wanting in reason, is made up in tumult, and *the cry of him that ruleth among fools, while the words of the wise are heard in quiet*. They *cried with a loud voice*, as soldiers when they are going to engage in battle, mustering up all their spirit and vigour for this desperate encounter.

4. They *stopped their ears*, that they might not hear their own noisiness; or, perhaps, under pretence, that they could not bear to hear his blasphemies. As Caiaphas rent *his clothes* when Christ said, *hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in glory*, Matth. xxvi. 64, 65. So these here *stopped their ears* when Stephen said, *I now see the Son of man standing in glory*; both pretending, that what was spoken was not to be heard with patience. Their *stopping their ears*, was, 1. A manifest specimen of their wilful obstinacy; they were resolved they would not hear what had a tendency to convince them, which was it that the prophets often complained of; they were *like the deaf adder*, that will not hear the voice of the charmer, Psal. lviii. 4, 5. 2. It was a fatal omen of that judicial hardness to which God would give them up. They *stopped their ears*, and then God in a way of righteous judgment stopped them. That was the work that was now in doing with the unbelieving Jews, *make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy*; thus was Stephen's character of them answered, *Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears*.

5. They *ran upon him with one accord*; the people and the elders of the people, judges, prosecutors, witnesses and spectators, they all flew upon him, as beasts upon their prey: See how violent they were, and in what haste, they *ran upon him*, though there was no danger of his out-running them; and see how unanimous they were in this evil thing, they ran upon him with one accord, one and all, hoping thereby to terrify him, and put him into confusion; envying him his composure and comfort in soul, with which he wonderfully enjoyed himself in the midst of this hurry, they did all they could to ruffle him.

6. They *cast him out of the city, and stoned him*; as if he were not worthy to live in Jerusalem; nay, not worthy to live in this world; pretending herein to execute the law of Moses, Lev. xxiv. 16. *He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall surely be put to death, all the congregation shall certainly stone him*. And thus they had put Christ to death, when this same court had found him guilty of blasphemy, but that for his greater ignominy they were desirous he should be crucified, and God overruled it for the fulfilling of the scripture. The fury with which they managed the execution, is intimated in that, *they cast him out of the city*, as if they could not bear the sight of him; they treated him as an anathema, as the effacing of all things. The witnesses against him, were the leaders in the execution, according to the law, Deut. xvii. 7. *The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death*, and particularly in the case of blasphemy, Lev. xxiv. 14. Deut. xiii. 9. Thus they were to confirm their testimony. Now the stoning of a man being a laborious piece of work, the witnesses put off their upper garments that they might not hang in their way, and they *laid them down at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul*, now a pleased spectator of this tragedy; it is the first time we find mention of his name, we shall know it and love it better when we find it changed to Paul, and him changed from a persecutor into a preacher. This little instance of his agency in Stephen's death, he afterwards reflected upon with regret, Acts xxii. 20. *I kept the raiment of them that slew him*.

Secondly, See the *strength of grace in Stephen*, and the wonderful instances of God's favour to him, and working in him. As his persecutors were full of Satan, so was he *full of the holy Ghost*, fuller than ordinary, *anointed with fresh oil* for the combat, that *as the day*, so might the *strength be*. Upon this account they are blessed who are *persecuted for righteousness sake*, that *the Spirit of God and of glory rests upon them*, 2 Pet. iv. 14. When he was chosen to public service he was described to be a man *full of the holy Ghost*, chap. vi. 5. and now he is called out to martyrdom he has still the same character. Note, They that are full of the holy Ghost are fit for any thing, either to do for Christ, or to suffer for him. And those whom God calls out to hard services for his name, he will qualify them for those services, and carry them comfortably through them, by *filling them with the holy Ghost*; that as their afflictions for Christ do abound, their consolation in him may yet more abound, and then *none of these things move them*.

Now here we have a remarkable communion between this blessed martyr and the blessed Jesus in this critical moment. When

the followers of Christ are for his sake *killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter*; doth that separate them from the love of Christ? Doth he love them the less? Do they love him the less? No, by no means; and so it appears by this story: In which we may observe,

1. Christ's gracious manifestation of himself to Stephen, both for his comfort, and for his honour in the midst of his sufferings; when they were *cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth*; ready to eat him up then he had a view of the glory of Christ, sufficient to *fill him with joy unspeakable*; which was intended not only for his encouragement, but for the support and comfort of all God's suffering servants in all ages.

1. He *being full of the holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven*, ver. 55. 1. Thus he *looked above* the power and fury of his persecutors, and did as it were *despise them, and laugh them to scorn, as the daughter of Zion*, Isa. xxxvii. 22. They had their eyes fixed upon him full of malice and cruelty, but he *looked up to heaven*, and never minded them; was so taken up with the eternal life, now in prospect, that he seemed to have no manner of concern for the natural life, now at stake. Instead of looking about him to see either which way he was in danger, or which way he might make his escape, he *looks up to heaven*; for thence only comes his help, and thitherward his way is still open; though they compass him about on every side, they cannot interrupt his intercourse with heaven. Note, A believing regard to God and the upper world, will be of great use to us to set us above the fear of man; for as far as we are under the influence of that, we *forget the Lord our maker*, Isa. li. 13. 2. Thus he directed his sufferings to the glory of God, to the honour of Christ, and did as it were appeal to heaven concerning them, *Lord, for thy sake I suffer this*; and expresses his earnest expectation that Christ should be *magnified in his body*. Now he was ready to be offered, he *looks up stedfastly* to heaven, as one willing to offer himself. 3. Thus he lifted up his soul with his eyes to God in the heavens in pious ejaculations, calling upon God for wisdom and grace to carry him through this trial in a right manner. God has promised that he will be with his servants whom he calls out to suffer for him; but he will *for this be sought unto*. He is *nigh unto them*, but it is *in that which they call upon him for*. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*. 4. Thus he breathed after the heavenly country to which he saw the fury of his persecutors would presently send him. It is good for dying saints to *look up stedfastly to heaven*; yonder's the place whither death will carry my better part, and then, *O death, where is thy sting?* 5. Thus he made it to appear that he was *full of the holy Ghost*; for wherever the Spirit of grace dwells, and works, and reigns, he directs the eye of the soul upward. Those that are *full of the holy Ghost will look up stedfastly to heaven*, for there the heart is. 6. Thus he put himself into a posture to receive the following manifestation of the divine glory and grace. If we expect to hear from heaven, we must look up stedfastly to heaven.

2. He *saw the glory of God*, ver. 55. for he saw, in order to that, the *heavens opened*, ver. 50. Some think his eyes were strengthened and the sight of them so raised above its natural pitch, by a supernatural power, that he saw into the *third heavens*, though at so vast a distance, as Moses's sight was enlarged to see the whole land of Canaan. Others think, it was a representation of the glory of God set before his eyes, as before Isaiah and Ezekiel, heaven did as it were come down to him, as Rev. xxi. 2. The heavens were opened to give him a view of the happiness he was going to, that he might in prospect of that go cheerfully through death, so great a death. Would we by faith *look up stedfastly*? we might *see the heavens opened* by the mediation of Christ, the veil being rent, and *a new and living way laid open for us into the holiest*: *The heaven is opened* for the settling of a correspondence between God and men, that his favours and blessings may come down to us, and our prayers and praises may go up to him. We may also see the *glory of God*, as far as he has revealed it in his word; and the sight of this will carry us through all the terrors of sufferings and death.

3. He *saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God*, ver. 55. *the Son of man*, so it is, ver. 56. Jesus being *the Son of man*, having taken our nature with him to heaven, and being there *clothed with a body*, might be seen with bodily eyes, and so Stephen saw him. When the Old Testament prophets *saw the glory of God*, it was attended with angels. The Shechinah or divine presence in Isaiah's vision was attended with Seraphim; in Ezekiel's vision with Cherubim; both signifying the angels, the ministers of God's providence: But here no mention is made of the angels, though they surround the throne and the Lamb; and instead of them Stephen sees Jesus at the right hand of God, the great Mediator of God's grace, from whom more glory redounds to God, than from all the ministrations of the holy angels: The glory of God shines brightest in the face of Jesus Christ; for there shines the glory of his grace, which is the most illustrious instance of his glory. God appears more glorious with Jesus standing at his right hand, than with millions of angels about him. Now, 1. Here is a proof of the exaltation of Christ to the Father's right hand; the apostles saw him ascend, but they did not see him sit down, *a cloud received him out of their sight*. We are told that he sat down on the right hand of God, but was he ever seen there? Yes: Stephen saw him there,

and was abundantly satisfied with the sight. He saw Jesus at the right hand of God, noting both his transcendent dignity, and his sovereign dominion; his uncontrollable ability, and his universal agency; whatever God's right hand either gives to us, or receives from us, or doth concerning us, it is by him; for he is his right hand. 2. He is usually said to sit there; but Stephen sees him standing there, as one more than ordinarily concerned at present for his suffering servant; he stood up as a judge to plead his cause against his persecutors, he is raised up out of his holy habitation, Zech. ii. 13. Comes out of his place to punish, Isa. xxvi. 21. He stands ready to receive him and crown him, and in the mean time to give him a prospect of the joy set before him. 3. This was intended for the encouragement of Stephen, he sees Christ is for him, and then no matter who is against him. When our Lord Jesus was in his agony an angel appeared to him strengthening him, but Stephen had Christ himself appearing to him. Note, Nothing so comfortable to dying saints, nor so animating to suffering saints, as to see Jesus at the right hand of God; and blessed be God, by faith we may see him there.

4. He told those about him what he saw, ver. 56. Behold, I see the heavens opened; that which was a cordial to him, ought to have been a conviction to them, and a caution to them to take heed of proceeding against one whom heaven thus smiled upon; and therefore what he saw he declared, let them make what use they pleased of it. If some were exasperated by it, others, perhaps, might be wrought upon to consider this Jesus whom they persecuted, and to believe in him.

2. His pious addresses to Jesus Christ; the manifestation of God's glory to him, did not set him above praying, but rather set him upon it. They stoned Stephen calling upon God, ver. 59. Though he called upon God, and by that shewed himself to be a true-born Israelite, yet they proceeded to stone him, not considering how dangerous it is to fight against those that have an interest in heaven. Though they stoned him, yet he called upon God; nay, therefore he called upon him. Note, It is the comfort of those who are unjustly hated and persecuted by men, that they have a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to call upon. Men stop their ears, as they did here, ver. 57. but God doth not. Stephen was now cast out of the city, but he was not cast out from his God. He was now taking his leave of the world, and therefore calls upon God, for we must do that as long as we live. Note, It is good to die praying; then we need help; strength we never had, to do a work we never did; and how must we fetch in that help and strength, but by prayer.

Two short prayers Stephen offered up to God in his dying moments, and in them as it were breathed out his soul.

1. Here is a prayer for himself; Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit. Thus Christ had himself resigned his Spirit immediately into the hand of the Father: we are here taught to resign ours into the hands of Christ as Mediator, by him to be recommended to the Father. Stephen saw Jesus standing at the Father's right hand, and he thus calls to him, blessed Jesus, do that for me now, which thou standest there to do for all thine, receive my departing spirit into thy hand. Observe,

1. The soul is the man, and our great concern, living and dying, must be about our souls, Stephen's body was to be miserably broke and shattered, and overwhelmed with a shower of stones, the earthly house of this tabernacle violently beaten down and abused; but however it goes with that, Lord, saith he, let my spirit be safe; let it go well with my poor soul. Thus while we live, our care should be, that though the body be starved or stripped, the soul may be fed and clothed; though the body lies in pain, the soul may dwell at ease. And when we die, that though the body be thrown by as a despised broken vessel, and a vessel in which there is no pleasure, yet the soul may be presented a vessel of honour; that God may be the strength of the heart, and its portion, though the flesh fail.

2. Our Lord Jesus is God, to whom we are to seek, and in whom we are to confide, and comfort ourselves living and dying. Stephen here prays to Christ, and so must we; for it is the will of God that all men should thus honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. It is Christ we are to commit ourselves to, who alone is able to keep what we commit to him against that day, it is necessary we have an eye to Christ when we come to die; for there is no venturing into another world but under his conduct; no living comforts in dying moments, but what are fetched from him.

3. Christ's receiving our spirits at death, is the great thing we are to be careful about, and to comfort ourselves with. We ought to be in care about this while we live, that Christ may receive our spirits when we die; for if he reject and disown them, whither will they betake themselves? How can they escape being a prey to the roaring lion? To him therefore we must commit them daily to be ruled and sanctified, and made meet for heaven, and then, and not otherwise, he will receive them. And if this has been our care while we live, it may be our comfort when we come to die, that we shall be received into everlasting habitations.

2. Here is a prayer for his persecutors, ver. 60.

1. The circumstances of this prayer are observable, for it seems to have been offered up with something more of solemnity than the former. 1. He kneeled down; which was an expression of his humility in prayer. 2. He cried with a loud voice; which was an

expression of his importunity. But why should he thus shew more humility and importunity in this request than in the former? Why, there was none could doubt of his being in good earnest in his prayers for himself, and therefore there he needed not to use such outward expressions of it; but in his prayer for his enemies, because that is so much against the grain of corrupt nature, it was requisite he should give proofs of his being in earnest.

2. The prayer itself; Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; there in he followed the example of his dying Master, who prayed thus for his persecutors, Father, forgive them; and set an example to all following sufferers in the cause of Christ, thus to pray for those that persecute them. Prayer may preach; this did so to those who stoned Stephen; and therefore he kneeled down, that they might take notice he was going to pray, and cried with a loud voice, that they might take notice of what he said, and might learn, 1. That what they did was a sin, a great sin, which, if divine mercy and grace did not prevent, would be laid to their charge, to their everlasting confusion. 2. That notwithstanding their malice and fury against him, he was in charity with them, and was so far from desiring that God would avenge his death upon them, that it was his hearty prayer to God, that it might not in any degree be laid to their charge. A sad reckoning there would be for it, if they did not repent, it would certainly be laid to their charge; but he, for his part, did not desire the awful day. Let them take notice of this, and when their thoughts were cool, surely they would not easily forgive themselves putting him to death, who could so easily forgive them. The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul, Prov. xxix. 10. 3. That though the sin was very heinous yet they must not despair of the pardon of it upon their repentance. If they would lay it to their hearts, God would not lay it to their charge. "Do you think (saith St. Austin) that Paul heard Stephen pray this prayer? It is likely he did (saith he) and ridiculed it then; (audivit sublimans, sed irrisit) but afterwards he had the benefit of it, and fared the better for it."

3. His expiring with this; when he had said this, he fell asleep; or, as he was saying this, the blow came that was mortal. Note, Death is but a sleep to good people; not the sleep of the soul, Stephen had given that up into Christ's hand, but the sleep of the body; it is its rest from all its griefs and toils, it is perfect ease and indolence. Stephen died as much in a hurry as ever any man did, and yet when he died, he fell asleep; he applied himself to his dying work with as much composure of mind, as if he had been going to sleep; it was but closing his eyes and dying. Observe, he fell asleep when he was praying for his persecutors; it is expressed as if he thought he could not die in peace till he had done that. It contributes very much to our dying comfortably, to die in charity with all men; we are then found of Christ in peace; let not the sun of life go down upon our wrath. He fell asleep; the vulgar Latin adds, in the Lord; in the embraces of his love. If he thus sleep, he shall do well; he shall awake again in the morning of the resurrection.

C H A P. VIII.

In this chapter we have an account of the persecutions of the Christians, and the propagating of Christianity thereby: It was strange, but very true, that the disciples of Christ the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied. (1.) Here is the church suffering, upon the occasion of the putting Stephen to death a very sharp storm arose, which forced many from Jerusalem, ver. 1,—3. (2.) Here is the church spreading by the ministry of Philip and others, that were dispersed upon that occasion. We have here, (1.) The gospel brought to Samaria, preached there, ver. 4, 5. embraced there, ver. 6,—8. even by Simon Magus, ver. 9,—13. The gift of the holy Ghost conferred upon some of the believing Samaritans by the imposition of the hands of Peter and John, ver. 14,—17. And the severe rebuke given by Peter to Simon Magus for bidding money for a power to bestow that gift, ver. 18,—25. (2.) The gospel sent to Ethiopia, by the Eunuch, a person of quality of that country; he is returning home in his chariot from Jerusalem, ver. 26,—28. Philip is sent to him, and in his chariot preaches Christ to him, ver. 29,—35. baptizeth him upon his profession of the Christian faith, ver. 36,—38. and then leaves him, ver. 39, 40. Thus in different ways and methods, the gospel was dispersed among the nations, and one way or other, Have they not all heard?

1. AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.

In these verses we have,

First, Something more concerning Stephen, and his death; how people stood affected to it; variously, as generally in such cases, according to mens different sentiments of things. Christ had told his disciples, when he was parting with them, John xvi. 20. Ye shall weep

weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. Accordingly here is,

1. Stephen's death rejoiced in by one ; by many, no doubt, but by one in particular, and that was Saul, who was afterwards called Paul ; he was consenting to his death, *συνοδοῦν*, he consented to it with delight ; so the word signifies ; he was pleased with it, he fed his eyes with this bloody spectacle, in hopes it would put a stop to the growth of Christianity. We have reason to think, that Paul ordered Luke to insert this for shame to himself, and glory to free grace. Thus he owns himself guilty of the blood of Stephen, and aggravates it with this, that he did not do it with regret and reluctance, but with delight and a full satisfaction ; like those who not only do such things, but have pleasure in them that do them.

2. Stephen's death bewailed by others, *ver. 2. Devout men*, which some understand of those that were properly so called, proselytes, one of whom Stephen himself probably was : Or, it may be taken more largely, some of the church that were more devout and zealous than the rest, went and gathered up the poor crushed and broken remains, to which they gave a decent interment : Probably in the field of blood, which was bought some time ago to bury strangers in. They buried him solemnly, and made great lamentation over him ; Though his death was of great advantage to himself, and great service to the church, yet they bewailed it as a general loss, so as well qualified was he for the service, and so likely to be useful both as a deacon and as a disputant. It is an ill symptom, if when such men are taken away, it is not laid to heart. Those devout men paid these their last respects to Stephen, 1. To shew that they were not ashamed of the cause for which he suffered, nor ashamed of the wrath of those that were enemies to it, for though they now triumph, the cause is a righteous cause, and will be at last a victorious one. 2. To shew the great value and esteem they had for this faithful servant of Jesus Christ, this first martyr for the gospel, whose memory shall always be precious to them, notwithstanding the ignominy of his death. They study to do honour to him, whom God put honour upon. 3. To testify their belief and hope of the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Secondly, An account of this persecution of the church, which begins upon the martyrdom of Stephen. When the fury of the Jews ran with such violence, and to such a height against Stephen it could not quickly either stop itself or spend itself. The bloody are often in scripture called *blood-thirsty* ; for when they have tasted blood they thirst for more. One would have thought Stephen's dying prayers, and dying comforts should have overcome them, and melted them into a better opinion of Christians and Christianity, but it seems it did not ; the persecution goes on ; for, 1. They were more exasperated when they saw they could prevail nothing, and as if they hoped to be too hard for God himself, they resolve to follow their blow ; and, perhaps, because they were none of them struck dead upon the place for stoning Stephen, their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil. 2. Perhaps the disciples were the more emboldened to dispute against them as Stephen did, seeing how triumphantly he finished his course, which would provoke them so much the more. Observe,

1. Against whom this persecution was raised ; it was against the church in Jerusalem, which is no sooner planted, but it is persecuted ; as Christ often intimated, that tribulation and persecution would arise because of the word. And Christ had particularly foretold that Jerusalem would soon be made too hot for his followers, for that city had been famous for killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent to it, *Mat. xxiii. 37*. It should seem that in this persecution many were put to death, for Paul owns that at this time he persecuted this way unto the death, *Acts xxii. 4*. And, *chap. xxvi. 10*. that when they were put to death he gave his voice against them.

2. Who was an active man in it ; none so zealous, so busy as Saul, a young Pharisee, *ver. 3*. As for Saul, (who had been twice mentioned before, and now again for a notorious persecutor) he made havock of the church ; he did all he could to lay it waste and ruin it ; he cared not what mischief he did to the disciples of Christ, nor knew when to take up. He aimed at no less than the cutting off of the gospel Israel, that the name of it should be no more in remembrance, *Psal. lxxxiii. 4*. he was the fittest tool the chief priests could find out to serve their purposes ; he was informer general against the disciples, a messenger of the great council to be employed in searching for meetings, and seizing all that were suspected to favour that way. Saul was bred a scholar, a gentleman, and yet did not think it below him to employ in the dirtiest work of that kind. 1. He entered into every house, making no difficulty of breaking open doors night or day, and having a force attending him for that purpose. He entered into every house where they used to keep their meetings, or every house that had any Christians in it, or was thought to have. No man could be secure in his own house, though it is his castle. 2. He haled with the utmost contempt and cruelty, both men and women, dragged them along the streets, without any regard to the tenderness of the weaker sex ; he stooped so low as to take cognizance of the meanest that were leavened with the gospel, so extremely bigotted was he. 3. He committed them to prison, in order to their being tried and put to death, unless they would renounce Christ ; and some we find were compelled by him to blaspheme, *Acts xxvi. 11*.

3. What was the effect of this persecution.

They were all scattered abroad, *ver. 1*. not all the believers, but all the preachers ; who were principally struck at, and against whom warrants were issued out to take them up. They remembering our Master's rule, when they persecute you in one city, flee to another, dispersed themselves by agreement throughout the regions of Judea, and of Samaria ; not so much for fear of sufferings, for Judea and Samaria were not so far off from Jerusalem, but that, if they made a publick appearance there, as they determined to do, their persecutors power would soon reach them there ; but because they looked upon this as an intimation of providence to them to scatter ; their work was pretty well done in Jerusalem, and now it was time to think of the necessities other places, for their Master had told them that they must be his witnesses in Jerusalem, first, and then in all Judea and in Samaria, and then to the uttermost part of the earth, *Acts i. 8*. and that method they observe. Though persecution may not drive us off from our work, yet it may send us, as a hint of providence to work elsewhere.

The preachers were all scattered except the apostles, who probably were directed by the Spirit to continue at Jerusalem yet for some time, they being, by the special providence of God, screened from the storm, and by the special grace of God enabled to face the storm. They tarried at Jerusalem, that they might be ready to go where their assistance was most needed by the other preachers that were sent to break the ice ; as Christ ordered his disciples to go to those places where he himself designed to come, *Luke x. 1*. The apostles continued longer together at Jerusalem than one would have thought, considering the command and commission given them, to go into all the world, and to disciple all nations ; see *Acts xv. 6*. *Gal. i. 17*. But what was done by the evangelists whom they sent forth, was reckoned as done by them.

4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word. 5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them : and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8. And there was great joy in that city. 9. But there was a certain man called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one. 10. To whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12. But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women. 13. Then Simon himself believed also : and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Samson's riddle is here again unriddled, out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. The persecution that was designed to extirpate the church, was by the over-ruling providence of God made an occasion of the enlargement of it. Christ had said, I am come to send fire on the earth. And they thought by scattering those who were kindled with that fire to have put it out, but instead of that they did but help to spread it.

1. Here is a general account of what was done by them all ; *ver. 4*. They went every where preaching the word. They did not go to hide themselves for fear of suffering, no not to shew themselves as proud of their sufferings, but they went up and down to scatter the knowledge of Christ in every place where they were scattered. They went every where, into the way of the Gentiles, and the cities of the Samaritans, which before they were forbidden to go into, *Acts x. v*. They did not keep together in a body, though that might have been a strength to them, but they scattered into all parts ; not to take their ease, but to find out work. They went evangelizing the word, preaching the word of the gospel, that, was it which filled them, and which they endeavoured to fill the country with, those of them that were preaching, in their preaching, and others in their common converse. They were now in a country where they were no strangers, for Christ and his disciples had converted much in the regions of Judea ; so that they had a foundation laid there for them to build upon ; and it would be requisite to let the people there know what that doctrine which Jesus had preached there some time ago was come to, and that it was not left and forgotten, as perhaps they were made to believe.

2. A particular account of what was done by Philip ; we shall hear of the progress and success of others of them afterwards, *chap. xi. 19*. But here must attend the motions of Philip, not Philip the apostle, but Philip the deacon, who was chosen and ordained to serve tables, but having used the office of a deacon well, he purchased

to himself a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, 1 Tim. iii. 13. Stephen was advanced to the degree of a martyr, Philip to the degree of an evangelist, which when he entered upon, being obliged by it to give himself to the word and prayer, he was no doubt discharged from the office of a deacon, for how could he serve tables at Jerusalem, which by that office he was obliged to do, when he was preaching in Samaria? And it is probable two others were chosen in the room of Stephen and Philip. Now observe.

First, What wonderful success Philip had in his preaching, and what reception he met with.

1. The place he chose was the city of Samaria; the head city of Samaria, the metropolis of that country, which stood there where the city of Samaria had formerly stood, which we read of the building of, 1 Kings xvi. 24. now called Sebaste. Some think it was the same with Sychem or Sychar, that city of Samaria where Christ was, John iv. 5. Many of that city then believed in Christ, though he did no miracles among them, ver. 39, 41. and now Philip, three years after, carries on the work then begun. The Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans; but Christ sent his gospel to slay all enmities, and particularly that between the Jews and the Samaritans, by making them one in his church.

2. The doctrine he preached was Christ; for he determined to know nothing else: He preached Christ to them, he proclaimed Christ to them, so the word signifies; as a king when he comes to the crown, is proclaimed throughout his dominions. The Samaritans had an expectation of the Messiah's coming, as appears by John iv. 25. now Philip tells them, he is come; and that the Samaritans are welcome to him. Ministers business is to preach Christ, Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified.

3. The proofs he produced for the confirmation of his doctrine, were miracles, ver. 6. To convince them that he had his commission from heaven, and therefore not only they might venture upon what he said, but they were bound to yield to it, he shews them this broad-seal of heaven annexed to it, which the God of truth would never put to a lye: The miracles were undeniable, they heard and saw the miracles which he did; they heard the commanding words he spoke, and saw the amazing effect of them immediately; that he spake, and it was done. And the nature of the miracles was such as suited the intention of his commission, and gave light and lustre to it.

1. He was sent to break the power of Satan; and in token of that, unclean spirits, being charged in the name of the Lord Jesus to remove, came out of many that were possessed with them, ver. 7. As far as the gospel prevails, Satan is forced to quit his hold of men, and his interest in them, and then those are restored to themselves, and to their right mind again, who, while he kept possession, were distracted. Wherever the gospel gains the admission and submission it ought to have, evils spirits are dislodged, and particularly unclean spirits, all inclinations to the lusts of the flesh, which war against the soul; for God has called us from uncleanness to holiness, 1 Thess. iv. 7. This was signified by the casting of these unclean spirits out of the bodies of people, who, it is here said, came out crying with a loud voice, which signifies that they came out with great reluctance, and fore against their wills, but were forced to acknowledge themselves overcome by a superiour power, Mark i. 26. iii. 11. ix. 26.

2. He was sent to heal the minds of men, to cure a distempered world, and to put it into a good state of health; and in token of that, many that were taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. Those distempers are instanced in, that were most difficult to be cured by a course of nature, that the miraculous cure might be the more illustrious; and those that were most expressive of the disease of sin, and that moral impotency which the souls of men labour under as to the service of God. The grace of God in the gospel, is designed for the healing of those that are spiritually lame and paralytick, and cannot help themselves, Rom. v. 6.

4. The acceptance which Philip's doctrine thus proved met with in Samaria, ver. 6. The people with one accord gave heed to those things, which Philip spake; induced thereto by the miracles which served at first to gain attention, and so by degrees to gain assent. There then begins to be some hopes of people, when they begin to take notice of what is said to them concerning the things of their souls and eternity; when they begin to give heed to the word of God, as those that are well pleased to hear it, desirous to understand and remember it, and that look upon themselves as concerned in it. The common people gave heed to Philip, ἑνὶ ὄχλῳ, a multitude of them, not here and there one, but with one accord; they were all of a mind, that the doctrine of the gospel was fit to be enquired into, and an impartial hearing given to it.

5. The satisfaction they had in attending on, and attending to Philip's preaching, and the success it had with many of them, ver. 8. There was great joy in that city, for, ver. 12. They believed Philip, and were baptized into the faith of Christ, the generality of them, both men and women. Observe, 1. Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, the constitution of that kingdom, the laws and ordinances of it, the liberties and privileges of it, and the obligations we are all under to be the loyal subjects of that kingdom; and he preached the name of Jesus Christ, as king of that kingdom; his name, which is above every name; he preach-

ed it up in its commanding power and influence, all that by which he has made himself known. 2. The people not only gave heed to what he said, but at length believed it; were fully convinced that it was of God, and not of men, and gave up themselves to the conduct and government of it. As to this mountain, on which they had hitherto worshipped God, and placed a great deal of religion in it, they were now as much weaned from it, as ever they had been wedded to it, and become the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and in the name of Christ, the true temple, John iv. 20, 23. 3. When they believed, without scruple (though they were Samaritans) and without delay they were baptized, openly professed the Christian faith, promised to adhere to it, and then, by washing them with water, were solemnly admitted into the communion of the Christian church, and owned as brethren by the disciples. Men only were capable of being admitted into the Jewish church by circumcision; but, to shew that in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female, Gal. iii. 28. but both are alike welcome to him, the initiating ordinance is such as women are capable of, for they are numbred with God's spiritual Israel, though not with Israel according to the flesh, Numb. i. 2. And from hence it is easily gathered, that women are to be admitted to the Lord's supper, though it doth not appear that there were any among those to whom it was first administered. 4. This occasioned great joy; each one rejoiced for himself, as he in the parable who found the treasure hid in the field; and they all rejoiced for the benefit hereby brought to their city, and that it came without opposition, which it would scarce have done, if Samaria had been within the jurisdiction of the chief priests. Note, The bringing of the gospel to any place is just matter of joy, of great joy to that place. Hence the spreading of the gospel in the world, is often prophesied of, in the Old Testament, as the diffusing of joy among the nations, Psalm lxvii. 4. Let the nations be glad, and sing for joy, 1 Thess. i. 6. The gospel of Christ doth not make men melancholy, but fills them with joy, if it be received as it should be; for it is glad tidings of great joy to all people, Luke ii. 10.

Secondly, What there was in particular at this city of Samaria, that made the success of the gospel there more than ordinary wonderful.

1. That Simon Magus had been busy there, and had gained a great interest among the people, and yet they believed the things that Philip spoke. To unlearn that which is bad, proves many times a harder task, than to learn that which is good. These Samaritans, though they were not idolaters, as the Gentiles, nor prejudiced against the gospel by traditions received from their fathers, yet they had of late been drawn to follow Simon a conjurer (for so Magus signifies) that made a mighty noise among them, and had strangely bewitched them.

We are here told,

(1.) How strong the delusion of Satan was, by which they were brought into the interests of this great deceiver; he had been for some time, nay, for a long time in this city using sorceries; perhaps, he came thither by the instigation of the devil, soon after our Saviour had been there, to undo what he had been doing there; for it was always Satan's way to crush a good work in its bud and infancy, 1 Cor. xi. 3. 1 Thess. iii. 5. Now,

1. Simon assumed to himself that which was considerable; he gave out that himself was some great one, and would have all people to believe so, and to pay him respect accordingly; and then, as to every thing else, they might do as they pleased; he had no design to reform their lives, or improve their worship and devotion, only to make them believe that he was, ὡς θεός, some divine person, or other. Justin Martyr saith, he would be worshipped as, ἀρχόντων θεόν, the chief god. He gave out himself to be the Son of God, the Messiah, so some think; or, to be an angel, or a prophet; perhaps, he was uncertain within himself what title of honour to pretend to; but he would be thought some great one. Pride and ambition, and an affectation of grandeur, has always been the principle of abundance of mischief, both to the world, and to the church.

2. The people ascribed to him what he pleased: 1. They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest; both young and old, both poor and rich, both governors and governed; to him they had regard, ver. 10, 11. and, perhaps, the more, because the time fixed for the coming of the Messiah was now expired, which had raised a general expectation of the appearing of some great one about this time: Probably, he was a native of their country, and therefore they embraced him the more cheerfully, that, by giving honour to him, they might reflect it upon themselves. 2. They said of him, This man is the great power of God; The power of God, that great power; so it might be read: That power which made the world. See how ignorant, inconsiderate people mistake that which is done by the power of Satan, as if it were done by the power of God! Thus, in the Gentile world, devils pass for deities; and, in the antichristian kingdom, all the world wanders after a beast, to whom the dragon gives his power, and who opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, Rev. xiii. 2, 5. 3. They were brought to it by his sorceries; he bewitched the people of Samaria, ver. 9. bewitched them with sorceries, ver. 11. that is, either, (1.) By his magick arts he bewitched the minds of the people, at least, some of them, who drew in others; Satan, by

God's

God's permission, filled their hearts to follow Simon. *O foolish Galatians*, saith Paul, *who hath bewitched you?* Gal. iii. 1. These people are said to be *bewitched by Simon*, because they were so strangely infatuated to believe a lye. Or, (2.) By his magick arts he did many *signs and lying wonders*, which seemed to be miracles, but really were not so; like those of the *magicians of Egypt*, and those of the *man of sin*, 2 Thess. ii. 9. When they knew no better, they were influenced by his *sorceries*; but when they were acquainted with Philip's real miracles, they saw plainly that the one was real, and the other a sham, and there was as much difference as between Aaron's rod and those of the magicians: *What is the chaff to the wheat?* Jer. xxiii. 28.

Thus, notwithstanding the influence Simon Magus had had upon them, and the lothness there generally is in people to own themselves in an error, and to retract it, yet, when they saw the difference between Simon and Philip, they quitted Simon, gave heed no longer to him, but to Philip: And thus you see,

(2.) How strong the power of divine grace is, by which they were brought to Christ, who is truth itself, and was (as I may say) the great undeceiver. By that grace working with the word, they that had been *led captive by Satan*, were brought into obedience to Christ. Where Satan, as a *strong man armed*, kept possession of the palace, and thought himself safe, Christ, as a *stronger than he*, dispossessed him, and divided the spoil; led captivity captive, and made those the trophies of his victory, whom the devil had triumphed over. Let us not despair of the worst, when even those whom Simon Magus had bewitched, were brought to believe.

2. Here is another thing yet more wonderful, that Simon Magus himself became a convert to the faith of Christ, in shew and profession, for a time. *Is Saul also among the prophets?* Yes, ver. 13. Simon himself believed also; he was convinced that Philip preached a true doctrine, because he saw it confirmed by real miracles, which he was the better able to judge of, because he was conscious to himself of the trick of his own pretended ones. 1. The present conviction went so far, that he was baptized, was admitted, as other believers were, into the church by baptism; and we have no reason to think that Philip did amiss in baptizing him; no, nor in baptizing him quickly. Though he had been a very wicked man, a forcerer, a pretender to divine honours, yet, upon his solemn profession of repentance for his sin, and faith in Jesus Christ, he was baptized. For as great wickedness before conversion keeps not true penitents from the benefit of God's grace, so neither should it keep professing ones from church fellowship. Prodigals, when they return, must be joyfully welcomed home, though we cannot be sure but that they will play the prodigal again. Nay, though he was now but an hypocrite, and really in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, all this while, and would soon have been found to be so, if he had been tried a while, yet Philip baptized him; for it is God's prerogative to know the heart: the church, and its ministers, must go by a judgment of charity, as far as there is room for it. It is a maxim in the law, *Denec contrarium patet, semper præsumitur meliori parti*; we must hope the best as long as we can: And it is a maxim in the discipline of the church, *De secretis non judicat ecclesia*; the secrets of the heart God only judgeth. 2. The present conviction lasted so long, that he continued with Philip, though afterwards he apostatized from Christianity, yet not quickly. He courted Philip's acquaintance, and now he that had given out himself to be some great one, is content to sit at the feet of a preacher of the gospel. Even bad men, very bad, may sometimes be in a good frame, very good; and they whose hearts still go after their covetousness, may possibly not only come before God as his people come, but continue with them. 3. The present conviction was wrought and kept up by the miracles; he wondered to see himself so far outdone in signs and miracles. Many wonder at the proofs of divine truths, that never experience the power of them.

14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. 15. Who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the holy Ghost. 16. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus) 17. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy Ghost. 18. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles hands, the holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the holy Ghost. 20. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24. Then answered Simon,

and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25. And they when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

God had wonderfully owned Philip in his work as an evangelist at Samaria, but he could do no more than an evangelist, there were some peculiar powers reserved to the apostles, for the keeping up of the dignity of their office; and here we have an account of what was done by two of them there, Peter and John. The twelve kept together at Jerusalem, ver. 1. and thither these good tidings were brought them, that Samaria had received the word of God, ver. 14. that a great harvest of souls was gathered, and was likely to be gathered in to Christ there: The word of God was not only preached to them, but received by them; they bid it welcome, admitted the light of it, and submitted to the power of it. When they heard it, they sent unto them Peter and John. If Peter had been, as some say he was, the prince of the apostles, he would have sent some of them; or, if he had seen cause, would have gone himself of his own accord; but he was so far from that, that he submitted to an order of the house, and, as a servant to the body, went whither they sent him. Two apostles were sent, the two most eminent, to Samaria, (1.) To encourage Philip, to assist him, and strengthen his hands. Ministers in a higher station, and that excel in gifts and graces, should contrive how they may be helpful to those in a lower sphere, and contribute to their comfort and usefulness. (2.) To carry on the good work that was begun among the people, and, with those heavenly graces that had enriched them, to confer upon them spiritual gifts. Now observe,

First, How they advanced and improved those of them that were sincere; it is said, ver. 16. That the holy Ghost was as yet fallen upon none of them, in those extraordinary powers which were conveyed by the descent of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost; they were none of them endued with the gifts of tongues, which seems then to have been the most usual, immediate effect of the pouring out of the Spirit: See chap. x. 45, 46. Which was both an eminent sign to them which believed not, and of excellent service to them that did. This, and other such gifts they had not, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so engaged to him, and interested in him, which was necessary to salvation, and in that they had joy and satisfaction, ver. 8. though they could not speak with tongues. They that are indeed given up to Christ, and have experienced the sanctifying influences and operations of the Spirit of grace, have great reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though they have not those gifts that are for ornament, and would make them bright.

But it is intended that they shall go on to the perfection of the present dispensation, for the greater honour of the gospel. We have reason to think, that Philip had received these gifts of the holy Ghost himself, but not a power to confer them, the apostles must come to do that; and they did it, not upon all that were baptized, but upon some of them (and it should seem) such as were designed for some office in the church, or, at least, to be eminent active members of it; and upon some of them one gift of the holy Ghost, and upon others another: See 1 Cor. xii. 4, 8. xiv. 26.

Now, in order to this,

1. The apostles prayed for them, ver. 15. The Spirit is given, not to ourselves only, Luke xi. 13. but to others also, in answer to prayer. I will put my Spirit within you, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. but I will for this be enquired of, ver. 37. We may take encouragement from this example, in praying to God to give the renewing graces of the holy Ghost to them, whose spiritual welfare we are concerned for; for our children, for our friends, for our ministers; we should pray, and pray earnestly, that they may receive the holy Ghost; for that includes all blessings.

2. They laid their hands on them, to signify that their prayers were answered, and that the gift of the holy Ghost was conferred upon them; for, upon the use of this sign, they received the holy Ghost, and spake with tongues. The laying on of hands was anciently used in blessing, by those who blessed with authority. Thus the apostles blessed these new converts, ordained some to be ministers, and confirmed others in their Christianity. We cannot now, nor can any, thus give the holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; but this may intimate to us, that those whom we pray for, we should use our endeavours with.

Secondly, How they discovered and discarded him that was an hypocrite among them, and that was Simon Magus; for they knew how to separate between the precious and the vile. Now observe here,

1. The wicked proposal that Simon made, by which his hypocrisy was discovered, ver. 18, 19. When he saw that through laying on of the apostles hands, the holy Ghost was given, which should have confirmed his faith in the doctrine of Christ, and increased his veneration for the apostles, it gave him a notion of Christianity, as no other but an exalted piece of sorcery, in which he thought himself capable of being equal to the apostles, and therefore offered them money, saying, Give me also this power. He doth

not desire *them to lay their hands on him*, that he might receive the *holy Ghost* himself, for he did not foresee that any thing was to be got by that; but that they would convey to him a power to bestow the gift upon others: He was ambitious to have the honour of an apostle, but not at all solicitous to have the spirit and disposition of a Christian: He was more desirous to gain honour to himself, than to do good to others. Now, in making this motion, 1. He put a great affront upon *the apostles*, as if they were mercenary men, would do any thing for money, and loved it as well as he did; whereas they had left what they had for Christ; so far were they from aiming to make it more! 2. He put a great affront upon Christianity, as if the miracles that were wrought for the proof of it, were done by magick arts, only of a different nature from what he himself had practised formerly. 3. He shewed that, like Balaam, he aimed at *the rewards of divination*; for he would not have bid money for *this power*, if he had not hoped to get money by it. 4. He shewed that he had a very high conceit of himself, and that he had never his heart truly humbled: Such a wretch as he had been before his baptism, should have asked, like the prodigal, to be made *as one of the hired servants*: But as soon as he is admitted into the family, no less a place will serve him, than to be one of the stewards of the household, and to be intrusted with a power which Philip himself had not, but the apostles only.

2. The just rejection of his proposal, and the cutting reproof Peter gave him for it, ver. 20, 21, 22, 23.

(1.) Peter shews him his crime, ver. 20. *Thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money*; and thus, 1. He had overvalued *the wealth of this world*, as if it were an equivalent for any thing, and as if, because, as Solomon saith, *it answers all things*, relating to the life that now is, it would answer all things relating to the other life, and would purchase the pardon of sin, the gift of the *holy Ghost*, and eternal life. 2. He had undervalued the gift of the *holy Ghost*, and put it upon a level with the common gifts of nature and providence: He thought the power of an apostle might as well be had for a good fee, as the advice of a physician, or a lawyer; which was the greatest despite that could be done to the *Spirit of grace*. All the buying and selling of pardons and indulgences in the church of Rome is the product of this same wicked thought, that the gift of God may be purchased with money, when the offer of divine grace so expressly runs, *without money, and without price*.

(2.) He shews him his character, which is inferred from his crime. From every thing that a man saith or doth amiss, we cannot infer that he is an hypocrite in the profession he makes of religion; but this of Simon's was such a fundamental error, as could by no means consist with a state of grace; his bidding money (and that got by forcery too) was an uncontestable evidence that he was yet under the power of a worldly and carnal mind, and was yet *that natural man which receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them*: And therefore Peter tells him plainly, 1. *That his heart was not right in the sight of God*, ver. 21. Though thou professest to believe, and art baptized, yet thou art not sincere. We are as our hearts are, if they be not right, we are wrong; and they are open in the sight of God, who knows them, judgeth them, and judgeth of us by them. That our hearts are, which they are in the sight of God, who cannot be deceived; and if they be not right in his sight, whatever our pretensions be, our religion is vain, and will stand us in no stead: Our great concern is to approve ourselves to him in our integrity, for otherwise we cheat ourselves into our own ruin. Some refer this particularly to the proposal he made; what he asked is denied him, because his heart is not right in the sight of God in asking it; he doth not aim at the glory of God, or the honour of Christ in it, but to make a hand of it for himself; he asks and has not, because he asks amiss, that he may consume it upon his lusts, and be still thought some great one. 2. *That he is in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*; I perceive that thou art so, ver. 23. This is plain dealing, and plain dealing is best, when we are dealing about souls and eternity. Simon had got a great name among the people, and, of late, a good name too among God's people, and yet Peter here gives him a black character. Note, It is possible for a man to continue under the power of sin, and yet to put on a form of godliness. I perceive it, saith Peter. It was not so much by the Spirit of discerning, with which Peter was endued, that he perceived this, as by Simon's discovery of it in the proposal he made. Note, The disguises of hypocrites many times are soon seen through, the nature of the wolf shews itself, notwithstanding the cover of the sheeps clothing. Now the character here given of Simon is really the character of all wicked people. 1. They are in the gall of bitterness: odious to God, as that which is bitter as gall is to us, sin is an abominable thing which the Lord hates, and sinners are by it made abominable to him; they are vicious in their own nature; indwelling sin is a root of bitterness, that bears gall and wormwood, Deut. xxix. 18. The faculties corrupted, and the mind embittered against all good, Heb. xii. 15. It speaks likewise the pernicious consequences of sin; the end is bitter as wormwood. 2. They are in the bond of iniquity; bound over to the judgment of God by the guilt of sin, and bound under the dominion of Satan by the power of sin; led captive by him at his will, and it is a sore bondage, like that in Egypt, making the life bitter.

(3.) He reads him his doom in two things:

1. He shall sink with his worldly wealth, which he overvalued: *Thy money perish with thee*. 1. Hereby Peter rejects his offer with the utmost disdain and indignation: Dost thou think thou canst bribe us to betray our trust, and to put the power we are intrusted with into such unworthy hands? Away with thee, and thy money too; we will have nothing to do with either: *Get thee behind me, Satan*. When we are tempted with money to do an evil thing, we should see what a perishing thing money is, and scorn to be biassed with it. It is the character of the upright man, that he shakes his hands from holding, from touching of bribes, Isa. xxxiii. 15. 2. He warns him of his danger of utter destruction, if he continued in this mind: *Thy money will perish, and thou wilt lose it, and all that thou canst purchase with it*: As meats for the belly, and the belly for meats (1 Cor. vi. 13.) so goods for money, and money for goods, but God shall destroy both it and them, they perish in the using; but that is not the worst of it, thou wilt perish with it, and it with thee, and it will be an aggravation of thy ruin, and a heavy load upon thy perishing soul, that thou hadst money, which might have been made to turn to a good account, Luke xvi. 9. which might have been laid at the apostles feet, as a charity, and would have been accepted, but was thrust into their hands as a bribe, and was rejected: *Son, remember this*.

2. He shall come short of the spiritual blessings which he undervalued, ver. 21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter*; thou hast nothing to do with the gifts of the *holy Ghost*, thou dost not understand them, thou art excluded from them, hast put a bar in thine own door, thou canst not receive the *holy Ghost* thyself, nor power to confer the *holy Ghost* upon others, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God, if thou thinkest that Christianity is a trade to live by in this world, and therefore thou hast no part or lot in the eternal life in the other world which the gospel offers. Note, 1. There are many who profess the Christian religion, and yet have no part or lot in the matter; no part in Christ, John xiii. 8. no lot in the heavenly Canaan. 2. They are those whose hearts are not right in the sight of God, are not animated by a right spirit, nor guided by a right rule, nor directed to the right end.

(4.) He gives him good counsel notwithstanding, ver. 22. Though he was angry with him, yet he did not abandon him; and though he would have him see his case to be very bad, yet he would not have him think it desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel. Observe,

1. What it is that he adviseth him to; he must do his first works; 1. He must repent; must see his error, and retract it; must change his mind and way; must be humbled, and ashamed for what he has done; his repentance must be particular; repent of this, own thyself guilty in this, and be sorry for it; He must lay load upon himself for it, must not extenuate it, by calling it a mistake, or misguided zeal, but must aggravate it, by calling it wickedness, his wickedness, the fruit of his own corruption. Those that have said and done amiss, must, as far as they can, unsay it, and undo it again by repentance. 2. He must pray to God, must pray that God would give him repentance, and pardon upon repentance. Penitents must pray, which implies a desire towards God, and a confidence in Christ. Simon Magus, as great a man as he thinks himself, shall not be courted into the apostles communion, how much soever some would think it a reputation to them, upon any other terms, than those upon which other sinners are admitted, repentance and prayer.

2. What encouragement he gives him to do this; if perhaps the thought of thy heart, this wicked thought of thine may be forgiven thee. Note, 1. There may be a great deal of wickedness in the thought of the heart, its false notions, and corrupt affections, and wicked projects, which must be repented of, or we are undone. 2. The thought of the heart, though never so wicked, yet shall be forgiven upon our repentance, and not laid to our charge. When Peter here puts a perhaps upon it, the doubt is of the sincerity of his repentance, not of his pardon, if his repentance be sincere. If indeed the thought of thy heart may be forgiven, so it may be read. Or, it intimates, that the greatness of his sin might justly make the pardon doubtful, though the promise of the gospel had put the matter out of doubt, in case he did truly repent; like that, Sam. iii. 29. If so be there may be hope.

3. Simon's request to them to pray for him, ver. 24. He was startled and put into confusion by that which Peter said, finding that repented thus, which he thought would have been embraced with both arms, and he cries out, *Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me*. Here was, 1. Something well; that he was affected with the reproof given him, and terrified by the character given of him, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble; and that being so, he begged the prayers of the apostles for him, wishing to have an interest in them, who, he believed, had a good interest in heaven. 2. Something wanting; he begged of them to pray for him, but did not pray for himself, as he ought to have done; and, in desiring them to pray for him, his concern is more that the judgments he had made himself liable to might be prevented, than that his corruptions might be mortified, and his heart, by divine grace, be made right in the sight of God: Like Pharaoh, who would have Moses intreat the Lord for him, that he would take away this death only,

only, not that he would take away this sin, this hardness of heart, *Exod. viii. 8.—x. 17.* Some think, *Peter* had denounced some particular judgments against him, as against *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, which, upon this submission of his, at the apostles intercession, were prevented: Or, from what is related, he might infer, that some token of God's wrath would fall upon him, which he thus dreaded and deprecated.

Lastly, Here is the return of the apostles to Jerusalem, when they had finished the business they came about, for as yet they were not to disperse: But though they came hither to do that work which was peculiar to them as apostles, yet opportunity offering itself, they applied themselves to that which was common to all gospel ministers: 1. There in the city of Samaria they were preachers, they testified the word of the Lord, solemnly attested the truth of the gospel, and confirmed what the other ministers preached: They did not pretend to bring them any thing new, though they were apostles, but bore their testimony to the word of the Lord as they had received it. 2. In their road home they were itinerant preachers; as they passed through many villages of the Samaritans they preached the gospel: Though the congregations there were nothing so considerable as in the cities, either for number or figure, yet their souls were as precious, and the apostles did not think it below them to preach the gospel to them: God has a regard to the inhabitants of his villages in Israel, *Judg. v. 11.* and so should we.

26. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27. And he arose and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read *Esaïas* the prophet. 29. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thy self to this chariot. 30. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet *Esaïas*, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31. And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? and he desired Philip that he would come up, and sit with him. 32. The place of the scripture which he read, was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. 40. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Cesarea.

We have here the story of the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch to the faith of Christ; by whom, we have reason to think, the knowledge of Christ was sent into that country where he lived, and that scripture fulfilled, *Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands, one of the first of the nations, unto God, Psalm lxxviii. 30.*

First, Philip the evangelist is directed into the road where he would meet with this Ethiopian, *ver. 26.* When the churches in Samaria were settled, and had ministers appointed them, the apostles went back to Jerusalem, but Philip stays, expecting to be employed in breaking up fresh ground in the country; and here we have,

1. Direction given him by an angel (probably, in a dream, or vision of the night) what course to steer: *Arise and go towards the south.* Though angels were not employed to preach the gospel, they were often employed in carrying messages to ministers, for advice and encouragement, as *chap. v. 19.* We cannot now expect such guides in our way, but, doubtless, there is a special providence of God conversant about the removes and settlements of ministers, and one way or other he will direct those who sincerely desire to follow him, into that way in which he will own them, he will guide them with his eye: He must go southward, to the way that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, through the desert, or wilder-

ness of Judah. Philip would never have thought of going thither, into a desert, into a common road through the desert, small probability of finding work there! yet thither he is sent, according to our Saviour's parable, foretelling the call of the Gentiles, *Go ye into the high-ways, and the hedges, Matt. xxii. 9.* Sometimes God opens a door of opportunity to his ministers in places very unlikely.

2. His obedience to this direction, *ver. 27.* He arose and went; without objecting, or so much as asking what business have I there? or what likelihood of doing good there? He went out, not knowing whither he went, or whom he was to meet.

Secondly, An account is given of this eunuch, *ver. 27.* who, and what he was, on whom this distinguishing favour was bestowed.

1. He was a foreigner, a man of Ethiopia; there were two Ethiopias, one in Arabia, but that lay east from Canaan; it should seem, this was of Ethiopia in Africk, which lay south, beyond Egypt, a great way off from Jerusalem; for in Christ, they that were afar off were made nigh, according to the promise, that the ends of the earth should see the great salvation. The Ethiopians were looked upon as the meanest and most despicable of the nations, black-moors, as if nature had stigmatized them, yet the gospel is sent to them, and divine grace looketh upon them, though they are black, though the sun has looked upon them.

2. He was a person of quality, a great man in his own country; a eunuch; not in body, but in office; lord chamberlain, or steward of the household; and, either by the dignity of his place, or by his personal character, which commanded respect, he was of great authority, and bore a mighty sway, under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who, probably, was successor to the queen of Sheba, who is called the queen of the south; that country being governed by queens, to whom Candace was a common name, as Pharaoh to the kings of Egypt; he had the charge of all her treasure; so great a trust did she repose in him! Not many mighty, not many noble are called, but some are.

3. He was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, for he came to Jerusalem for to worship. Some think, he was a proselyte of righteousness, that was circumcised, and kept the feasts; others, that he was only a proselyte of the gate, a Gentile, but that had renounced idolatry, and worshipped the God of Israel occasionally in the court of the Gentiles: But, if so, then Peter was not the first that preached the gospel to the Gentiles, as he saith he was. Some think, there were remains of the knowledge of the true God in this country, ever since the queen of Sheba's time; and, probably, the ancestor of this eunuch was one of her attendants, who transmitted to his posterity what he learned at Jerusalem.

Thirdly, Philip and the eunuch are brought together into a close conversation; and now Philip shall know the meaning of his being sent into a desert, for there he meets with a chariot, that shall serve for a synagogue, and one man, the conversion of whom shall be, in effect, for ought he knows, the conversion of a whole nation.

1. Philip is ordered to fall in company with this traveller that is going home from Jerusalem towards Gaza, thinking he has done all the business of his journey, when the great business, which the overruling providence of God designed in it, was yet undone: He had been at Jerusalem, where the apostles were preaching the Christian faith, and multitudes professing it, and yet there he had taken no notice of it, and made no enquiries after it; nay, it should seem, had slighted it, and turned his back upon it; yet the grace of God pursues him, overtakes him in the desert, and there overcomes him. Thus God is often found of those that sought him not, *Isa. lxxv. 1.* Philip has this order, not by an angel, as before, but by the Spirit whispering it in his ear, *ver. 29.* Go near, and join thyself to this chariot; go so near as that the gentleman may take notice of thee. We should study to do good to those we light in company with upon the road: Thus the lips of the righteous may feed many. We should not be so shy of all strangers as some affect to be: Those we know nothing else, we know this of, that they have souls.

2. He finds him reading in his bible, as he sat in his chariot, *ver. 28.* He ran to him, and heard him read; he read out, for the benefit of those that were with him, *ver. 30.* He not only relieved the tediousness of the journey, but redeemed time by reading, not philosophy, history, or politicks, much less a romance, or a play, but the scriptures, the book of *Esaïas*; that book Christ read in, *Luke iv. 17.* and the eunuch here, which should recommend it particularly to our reading. Perhaps, the eunuch was now reading over again those portions of scripture which he had heard read and expounded at Jerusalem, that he might recollect what he had heard. Note, 1. It is the duty of every one of us to converse much with the holy scriptures. 2. Persons of quality should abound more than others in the exercises of piety, because their example will influence many, and they have their time more at command. 3. It is wisdom for men of business to redeem time for holy duties; time is precious, and it is the best husbandry in the world to gather up the fragments of time, that none be lost; to fill up every minute with something that will turn to a good account. 4. When we are returning from publick worship, we should use means in private for the keeping up of the good affections there kindled, and the preserving of the good impressions there made,

1 Chron. xxix. 18. 5. Those that are diligent in searching the scriptures, are in a fair way to improve in knowledge; for to him that hath shall be given.

3. He puts a fair question to him, *understandest thou what thou readest?* Not by way of reproach, but with design to offer him his service. Note, What we read and hear of the word of God it highly concerns us to understand; especially what we read and hear concerning Christ; and therefore we should often ask ourselves, whether we understood it or no? *Have ye understood all these things?* Mat. xiii. 51. And have ye understood them aright? We cannot profit by the scriptures unless we do in some measure understand them, 1 Cor. xi. 16, 17. And blessed be God, what is necessary to salvation, is easy to be understood.

4. He in a sense of his need of assistance, desires Philip's company, ver. 31. *How can I understand,* said he, *except some one guide me?* therefore pray come up and sit with me. 1. He speaks as one that had very low thoughts of himself and his own capacity and attainments. He was so far from taking it as an affront, to be asked, whether he understood what he read? though Philip was a stranger, on foot, and probably looked mean, (which many a less man would have done, and have called him an impertinent fellow, and bid him go about his business, what was it to him? that he takes the question kindly; makes a very modest reply, *How can I?* We have reason to think he was an intelligent man, and as well acquainted with the meaning of scripture as most were, and yet modestly confesseth his weakness. Note, Those that would learn, must see their need to be taught. The prophet must first own that he *knows not what these be*, and then the angel will tell him, Zech. iv. 13. 2. He speaks as one very desirous to be taught, to have *some one to guide him*. Observe, he read the scriptures, though there were many things in it which he did not understand; though there be many things in the scriptures which are dark and hard to be understood, nay, which are often misunderstood, yet we must not therefore throw them by; but study them for the sake of those things that are easy, which is the likeliest way to come by degrees to the understanding of those things that are difficult; for knowledge and grace grow gradually. 3. He invited Philip to come up and sit with him; not as Jehu took Jonadab into his chariot, to come see his zeal for the of Lord hosts, 2 Kings x. 16. but rather, come, see my ignorance, and instruct me. He will gladly do Philip the honour to take him into the coach with him, if Philip will do him the favour to expound a portion of scripture to him. Note, In order to our right understanding of the scripture, it is requisite we should have *some one to guide us*; some good books, and some good men, but above all, the Spirit of grace to lead us into all truth.

Fourthly, The portion of scripture which the Eunuch recited, with some hints of Philip's discourse upon it; the preachers of the gospel had a very good handle to take hold of those by, that were conversant with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and received them, especially when they found them actually engaged in the study of them, as the eunuch was here.

1. The chapter he was reading was the fifty third of Isaiah, two verses of which are here quoted, ver. 32, 33. part of the seven and eight verses; they are set down according to the Septuagint version, which in some things differs from the original Hebrew. Grotius thinks the eunuch read it in the Hebrew, but Luke takes the Septuagint translation, as readier to the language in which he wrote; and he supposeth that the eunuch had learned from the many Jews that were in Ethiopia both their religion and language. But considering that the Septuagint version was made in Egypt, which was the next country adjoining to Ethiopia, and lay betwixt them and Jerusalem, I rather think that translation was most familiar to him. It appears by Isaiah xx. 4. that there was much communication between those two nations, Egypt and Ethiopia. The greatest variation from the Hebrew is, that what in the original is, *he was taken from prison and from judgment*, hurried with the utmost violence and precipitation from one judgment-seat to another; or, *from force and from judgment he was taken away*; i. e. It was from the fury of the people, and their continual clamours, and the judgment of Pilate thereupon, that he was taken away; is here read, *in his humiliation his judgement was taken away*; he appeared so mean and despicable in their eyes, that they denied him common justice, and against all the rules of equity, which every man is entitled to the benefit of, they declared him innocent, and yet condemned him to die; nothing criminal can be proved upon him, but he is down, and down with him. Thus *in his humiliation his judgment was taken away*; so, the sense is much the same with that of the Hebrew.

So that these verses foretold concerning the Messiah,

1. That he should die; should be led to the slaughter, as sheep that were offered in sacrifice. That his life should be taken from among men, taken from the earth. With what little reason then was the death of Christ a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jews, when it was so plainly foretold by their own prophets? and was so necessary to the accomplishment of his undertaking? Then is the offence of the cross ceased.

2. That he should die wrongfully; should die by violence, should be hurried out of his life, and his judgment shall be taken a-

way; no justice done him; for he must be cut off, but not for himself.

3. That he should die patiently, like a lamb dumb before the shearer; nay, and before the butcher too, so he opened not his mouth; never was such an example of patience as our Lord Jesus was in his sufferings; when he was accused, when he was abused, he was silent, *reviled not again, threatened not*.

4. That yet he should live for ever, to ages which cannot be numbered; for so I understand those words, *who shall declare his generation?* The Hebrew word properly signifies, *the duration of one life* (Eccles. i. 4.) Now who can conceive or express how long he shall continue notwithstanding this; for his life is only taken from the earth; in heaven he shall live to endless and innumerable ages, as it follows in Isa. liii. 10. *He shall prolong his days*.

The eunuch's question upon this is, *of whom speaketh the prophet this?* ver. 34. He doth not desire Philip to give him some critical remarks upon the words and phrases, and the idioms of the language, but to acquaint him with the general scope and design of the prophecy, to furnish him with a key, in the use of which he might, by comparing one thing with another, be let into the meaning of the particular passages. Prophecies had usually in them something of obscurity, till they were explained by the accomplishment of them, as this now was. It is a material question he asks, and a very sensible one; doth the prophet speak this of himself? in expectation of being used, being misused, as the other prophets were? Or, doth he speak it of some other man, in his own age, or in some age to come. Though the modern Jews will not allow it to be spoken of the Messiah, yet their ancient doctors did so interpret it; and, perhaps, the eunuch knew it, and did partly understand it so himself, only he proposed this question to draw on discourse with Philip; for the way to improve in learning, is to consult the learned; as they must enquire the law at the mouth of the priests, Mal. ii. 7. so they must enquire the gospel, especially that part of the treasure which is hid in the field of the Old Testament, at the mouth of the ministers of Christ. The way to receive good instructions, is to ask good questions.

3. Philip takes this fair occasion given him, to open to him the great mystery of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, and him crucified. He began at this scripture, took that for his text (as Christ did another passage of the same prophecy, Luke iv. 21.) and preached unto him Jesus, ver. 35. That is all the account given us of Philip's sermon, because it was the same in effect with Peter's sermons, which we have had before. The business of gospel ministers, is to preach Jesus, and that is the preaching that is likely to do good. It is probable, Philip had now occasion for his gift of tongues, that he might preach Christ to this Ethiopian in the language of his own country. And here we have an instance of speaking of the things of God, and speaking of them to good purpose, not only as we sit in the house, but as we walk by the way, according to that rule, Deut. vi. 7.

Fifthly, The eunuch is baptized in the name of Christ, ver. 36, 37, 38. It is probable, the eunuch had heard at Jerusalem of the doctrine of Christ, so that it was not altogether new to him: But if he had, what could that do towards this speedy conquest that was made of his heart for Christ? It was a powerful working of the Spirit with, and by Philip's preaching, that gained the point. Now here we have,

1. The modest proposal which the eunuch made of himself to baptism, ver. 36. As they went on their way discoursing of Christ, the eunuch asking more questions, and Philip answering them to his satisfaction, they came unto a certain water, a well, river, or pond, the sight of which made the eunuch think of being baptized. Thus God by hints of providence which seem casual, sometimes puts his people in mind of their duty, which otherwise, perhaps, they would not have thought of. The eunuch knew not how little a while Philip might be with him, nor where he might afterwards enquire for him; he could not expect his travelling with him to his next stage, and therefore if Philip think fit, he will take the present convenience which offers itself of being baptized, *see, here is water*, which, perhaps, we may not meet with a great while again, *What doth hinder me to be baptized?* Canst thou shew any cause why I should not be admitted a disciple and follower of Christ by baptism? Observe, 1. He doth not demand baptism, doth not say, here is water, and here I am resolved I will be baptized; for if Philip have any thing to offer to the contrary, he is willing to wave it for the present. If he think him not fit to be baptized, or if there be any thing in the institution of the ordinance which will not admit such a speedy administration of it, he will not insist upon it. The most forward zeal, must submit to order and rule. But 2. He doth desire it, and unless Philip can shew cause why not, he desires it now, and is not willing to defer it. Note, In the solemn dedicating and devoting of ourselves to God, it is good to make haste and not to delay; for the present time is the best time, Psal. cxix. 60. They who have received the thing signified by baptism, should not put off receiving the sign. The eunuch feared lest the good affections now working in him should cool and abate, and therefore was willing presently to bind his soul with the baptismal bonds unto the Lord, that he might bring the matter to an issue.

2. The fair declaration which Philip made him of the terms upon which he might have the privilege of baptism, *ver. 37. If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayst*, i. e. If thou believest this doctrine which I have preached to thee concerning Jesus; if thou receive the record God has given concerning him, and set to thy seal that it is true. He must believe *with all his heart*, for *with the heart man believeth*, not with the head only, by an assent to gospel truths, in the understanding; but with the heart, by a consent of the will to gospel terms. If thou do indeed believe *with all thy heart*, thou art by that united to Christ, and if thou give proofs and evidences that thou dost so, thou mayst by baptism be joined to the church.

3. The confession of faith which the eunuch made in order to his being baptized; it is very short, but it is comprehensive, and much to the purpose, and what was sufficient, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. He was before a worshipper of the true God, so that all he had had to do now, was to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. 1. He believes that Jesus is *the Christ*, the true Messiah promised, the anointed one. 2. That Christ is Jesus, a saviour, the alone saviour of his people from their sins. And, 3. That this Jesus Christ is *the Son of God*, that he has a divine nature, as the son is of the same nature with the father; and that being the Son of God, he is the heir of all things. This is the principal, peculiar doctrine of Christianity, and whosoever believe this with all their heart, and confess it, they and their seed are to be baptized.

4. The baptizing of him hereupon; the eunuch ordered his coachman to stop, *commanded the chariot to stand still*, it was the best baiting-place he ever met with in any of his journies; *they went down both into the water*, for they had no convenient vessels with them, being upon a journey, wherewith to take up water, and must therefore go down into it; not that they stript off their clothes, and went naked into the water, but going barefoot according to the custom, they went, perhaps, up to the ankles or mid-leg into the water, and Philip sprinkled water upon him, according to the prophecy which this eunuch had probably but just now read, (for it was but a few verses before those which Philip found him upon) and was very apposite to his case, *Isa. lii. 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations*, kings and great men shall shut their mouths at him, shall submit to him; and acquiesce in him, *for that which had not before been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider*. Observe, Though Philip had very lately been deceived in Simon Magus, and had admitted him to baptism, though he afterwards appeared to be no true convert, yet he did not therefore scruple to baptize the eunuch upon his profession of faith immediately, without putting him upon a longer trial than usual. If some hypocrites croud into the church that afterwards prove a grief and scandal to us, yet we must not therefore make the door of admission any straiter than Christ has made it; they shall answer for their apostasy, and not we.

Sixthly, Philip and the eunuch are parted presently; and this is as surprizing as the other parts of the story. One would have expected that the eunuch should either have stayed with Philip, or have taken him along with him into his own country, and there being so many ministers in these parts he might be spared, and it would be worth while: but God ordered otherwise; as soon as they were come up out of the water, before the eunuch went into his chariot again, *the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip*, *ver. 39.* and did not give him time to make an exhortation to the eunuch, as usual after baptism, which it is probable the one intended, and the other expected; but his sudden departure was sufficient to make up the want of that exhortation, for it seems to have been miraculous, and that he was caught up in the air in the eunuch's sight, and so carried out of his sight; and the working of this miracle upon Philip, was a confirmation of his doctrine, as much as the working of a miracle by him would have been. He was caught away, and the eunuch saw him no more; but having lost his minister returned to the use of his bible again. Now here we are told,

1. How the eunuch was disposed; he went on his way rejoicing. He pursued his journey, business called him home, and he must hasten to it; for it was no way inconsistent with his Christianity, which places no sanctity or perfection in mens being hermits or recluses, but is a religion which men may, and ought to carry about with them into the affairs of this life. But he went on rejoicing; so far was he from reflecting upon this sudden resolution, and change, or advancement rather, in his religion, with any regret, that his second thoughts confirmed him abundantly in it, and he went on rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory; he was never better pleased in all his life. 1. He rejoiced that he himself was joined to Christ, and had an interest in him. And, 2. That he had these good tidings to bring to his countrymen, and a prospect of bringing them also, by virtue of his interest among them, into fellowship with Christ; for he returned not only a Christian but a minister. And some copies read this verse thus; *and when they were come up out of the water, the holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch*; (without the ceremony of the apostle's imposition of hands) but the angel of the Lord caught away Philip.

2. How Philip was disposed of, *ver. 40. He was found at Azotus*, or Ashdod, formerly a city of the Philistines, there the angel or Spirit of the Lord dropped him, which was above thirty miles from Gaza, whither the eunuch was going; and where Dr. Lightfoot

thinks he took ship, and went by sea into his own country. But Philip, wherever he was, would not be idle, *passing through he preached in all the cities* till he came to Cæsarea, and there he settled, and for ought appears, had his principal residence ever after; for at Cæsarea we find him in a house of his own, *Acts xx. 8.* He that had been faithful in working for Christ as an itinerant, at length gains a settlement.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. The famous story of St. Paul's conversion from being an outrageous persecutor of the gospel of Christ, to be an illustrious professor and preacher of it. (1.) How he was first awakened and wrought upon by an appearance of Christ himself to him as he was going upon an errand of persecution to Damascus: and what a condition he was in while he lay under the power of those convictions and terrors, *ver. 1,—9.* (2.) How he was baptized by Ananias, by immediate directions from heaven, *ver. 10,—19.* (3.) How he immediately commenced doctor, and preached the faith of Christ, and proved what he preached, *ver. 20,—22.* (4.) How he was persecuted, and narrowly escaped with his life, *ver. 23,—25.* (5.) How he was admitted among the brethren at Jerusalem, how he preached and was persecuted there, *ver. 26,—30.* (6.) The rest and quietness which the churches enjoyed for some time after this, *ver. 31.* 2. The cure wrought by Peter on Æneas, who had long been laid up of a palsy, *ver. 32,—35.* 3. The raising of Tabitha from death to life, at the prayer of Peter, *ver. 36,—43.*

1. AND Saul yet breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. 4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

We found mention made of Saul twice or thrice in the story of Stephen, for the sacred penman even longed to come to his story; and now we are come to it, not quite taking leave of Peter, but from hence-forward being mostly taken up with Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, as Peter was of the circumcision. His name in Hebrew was Saul, desired, though as remarkably little in stature, as his namesake king Saul was tall and stately; one of the ancients calls him; *Homo tricubitalis*, but four foot and a half in height; his Roman name which he went by among the citizens of Rome, was Paul, little. He was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a free city of the Romans, and himself a freeman of that city. His father and mother were both native Jews, therefore he calls himself a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*; he was of the tribe of Benjamin, which adhered to Judah. His education was in the schools of Tarsus first, which was a little Athens for learning; there he acquainted himself with the philosophy and poetry of the Greeks. Thence he was sent to the university at Jerusalem, to study divinity and the Jewish law; his tutor was Gamaliel an eminent Pharisee; he had extraordinary natural parts, and improved mightily in learning; he had likewise a handicraft trade, was bred to tent making; which was common with those among the Jews that were bred scholars (as Dr. Lightfoot faith) for the earning of their maintenance, and the avoiding of idleness.

This is the young man on whom the grace of God wrought this mighty change here recorded, about a year after the ascension of Christ, or little more. We are here told,

First, How bad he was, how very bad, before his conversion; just before, he was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, did his utmost to root it out, by persecuting all that embraced it. In other respects he was well enough, as touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless, a man of no ill morals, but a blasphemer of Christ, a persecutor of Christians, and injurious to both, *1 Tim. i. 13.* And so ill informed was his conscience, that he thought he ought to do what he did against the name of Christ, *Acts xxvi. 9.* and that he did God service in it, as was foretold, *John xvi. 2.* Here we have,

1. His general enmity and rage against the Christian religion, *ver. 1. He yet breathed out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples*

ciples of the Lord. The persons persecuted, were the *disciples of the Lord*; because they were so, under that character he hated and persecuted them; the matter of the persecution was *threatnings and slaughter*. There is persecution in threatening, as *Acts* iv. 17, 21. it terrifies the spirit, and breaks that: And though we say, *threatened folks live long*; yet those whom Saul threatened, if he prevailed not thereby to frighten them from Christ, he slew them; he *persecuted them to death*, *Acts* xxii. 4. His *breathing out threatening and slaughter*, intimates, that it was natural to him, and his constant business, he even breathed in this, as in his element; he breathed it out with heat and vehemence, his very breath, like that of some venomous creatures, was pestilential, he breathed death to the Christians wherever he came; he *puffed at them* in his pride, *Psal.* xii. 5. spit his venom at them in his rage. Saul yet breathing thus; it intimates, 1. That he still persisted in it; not satisfied with the blood of those he had slain, still he cries, *Give, give*. 2. That he shall shortly be of another mind; as yet he breathes out *threatnings and slaughter*, but he has not long to live such a life as this, that breath will be stopped shortly.

2. His particular design upon the Christians at Damascus; thither was the gospel now lately carried by those that fled from the persecution at Stephen's death, and thought to be safe and quiet there, and were connived at by those in power there: But Saul cannot be easy if he knows a Christian is quiet; and therefore hearing that the Christians in Damascus were so, he resolves to give them disturbance. In order to this, he applies himself to the high priest for a commission, *ver.* 1. to go to Damascus, *ver.* 2. The high priest needed not to be stirred up to persecute the Christians, he was forward enough of himself to do it; but it seems the young persecutor drove more furiously than the old one. Leaders in sin are the worst of sinners. And the profelytes which the Scribes and Pharisees make, often prove seven times more the children of hell than themselves. He saith, *Acts* xxii. 5. that this commission was had from the *whole estate of the elders*. And proud enough this furious bigot was, to have a commission to him directed, with the seal of the great Sanhedrin affixed to it.

Now the commission was to empower him to enquire among the synagogues or congregations of the Jews that were at Damascus, whether there were any that belonged to them that inclined to favour this new sect or heresy, that believed in Christ? and if he found any such, whether men or women, to bring them up prisoners to Jerusalem to be proceeded against according to law by the great council there. Observe, 1. The Christians are here said to be *those of this way*; those of *the way*; so it is in the original. Perhaps the Christians sometimes called themselves so, from Christ *the way*: or, because they looked on themselves as but in the way, and not yet at home. Or, the enemies thus represented it as *a way by itself, a by-way*, a party, a faction. 2. The high priest and Sanhedrin claimed a power over the Jews in all countries, and had a deference paid to their authority in matters of religion, by all their synagogues, even those that were not of the jurisdiction of the civil government of the Jewish nation. And such a sovereignty the Roman pontiff now claims, as the Jewish pontiff then did, though he has not so much to shew for it. 3. By this commission all that worshipped God in *the way that they called heresy*, though agreeing exactly with the original institutes, even of the Jewish church, whether they were *men or women*, were to be persecuted. Even the weaker sex, who in a case of this nature, might deserve excuse, or at least compassion, shall find neither with Saul no more than they do with the popish persecutors. 4. He was ordered to *bring them all bound to Jerusalem*, as criminals of the first magnitude; which, as it would be the more likely to terrify them, so it would be to magnify Saul, as having the command of the forces that were to carry them up, and opportunity of breathing out *threatnings and slaughter*. Thus was Saul employed when the grace of God wrought that great change in him. Let not us then despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin; for Paul himself obtained mercy, that he might be a monument, *1 Tim.* i. 13.

Secondly, How suddenly and strangely a blessed change was wrought in him, not in the use of any ordinary means, but by miracles. The conversion of Paul, is one of the *wonders of the church*. Here is,

(1.) The place and time of it; *as he journeyed he came near to Damascus*; and there Christ met with him.

1. He was *in the way*, travelling upon his journey, not in the temple, or the synagogue, or in the meeting of Christians, but *by the way*. The work of conversion is not tied to the church, though ordinarily publick administrations are made use of. Some are reclaimed in slumberings on the bed, *Job* xxxiii. 15, 16, 17. And sometimes in travelling upon the road alone, thoughts are as free, and there is as good an opportunity of communing with our own hearts, as upon the bed; and there the Spirit may set in with us; for that *wind blows where it listeth*. Some observe that Saul was spoken to abroad in the open air, that there might be no suspicion of imposture, or a trick put upon him in it.

2. He was near Damascus, almost at his journey's end, ready to enter the city, the chief city of Syria. Some observe, that he who was to be the apostle of the Gentiles, was converted to the faith

of Christ in a Gentile country. Damascus had been infamous for persecuting God's people formerly, they *threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron*, *Amos* i. 3. and now it was likely to be so again.

3. He was in a wicked way; pursuing his design against the Christians at Damascus, and pleasing himself with the thought that he should devour this new-born child of Christianity there. Note, Sometimes the grace of God works upon sinners, when they are at the worst, and hotly engaged in the most desperate sinful pursuits; which is much for the glory both of God's pity, and of his power.

4. The cruel edict and decree he had with him, *drew near to be put in execution*: and now it was happily prevented. Which may be considered, 1. As a great kindness to the poor saints at Damascus, who had notice of his coming, as appears by what Ananias said, *ver.* 13, 14. and were apprehensive of their danger from him, and trembled as poor lambs at the approach of a ravening wolf; Saul's conversion was their security for the present. Christ has many ways of *delivering the godly out of temptation*, and sometimes doth it by a change wrought in their persecutors, either restraining their wrathful spirits, *Psal.* lxxvi. 10. and mollifying them for a time, as the Old Testament Saul, who relented towards David more than once, *1 Sam.* xxiv. 16. xxvi. 21. Or, renewing their spirits, and fixing upon them durable impressions, as upon the New Testament Saul here. 2. It was also a very great mercy to Saul himself to be hindered from executing his wicked design, in which if he had now proceeded, perhaps, it had been the filling up of the measure of his iniquity. Note, It is to be valued as a signal token of the divine favour, if God either by the inward operations of his grace, or the outward occurrences of his providence prevent us from prosecuting and executing a sinful purpose, *1 Sam.* xxv. 32.

(2.) The appearance of Christ to him in his glory; here it is only said, that there *shined round about him a light from heaven*: But it appears by what follows, *ver.* 17. that the *Lord Jesus* was in this light, and *appeared to him by the way*. He *saw that just One*, *Acts* xxii. 14. and see *Acts* xxvi. 13. whether he saw him at a distance as Stephen saw him, in the heavens, or nearer in the air, is not certain. It is not inconsistent with what is said of the heavens receiving Christ till the end of time, *Acts* iii. 21. to suppose that he did upon such an extraordinary occasion as this make a personal visit, but a very short one, to this lower world; it was necessary to Paul's being an apostle, that he should have *seen the Lord*, and so he he did, *1 Cor.* ix. 1. xv. 8.

1. This light shined upon him suddenly, *ἐξαπνους*, when Paul never thought of any such thing, and without any previous warning. Christ's manifestations of himself to poor souls, are many times sudden and very surprizing, and he *prevents them with the blessings of his goodness*. This the disciples that Christ called to himself found. *Or ever I was aware*, *Cant.* vi. 12.

2. It was a light from heaven, the fountain of light, from the God of heaven, the Father of lights. It was a light *above the brightness of the sun*, *Acts* xxvi. 13. for it was visible at mid-day, and outshone the sun in his meridian strength and lustre, *Isa.* xxiv. 23.

3. It shone *round about him*, not in his face only, but on every side him; let him turn which way he will, he finds himself surrounded with the discoveries of it. And this was designed not only to startle him, and awaken his attention, for well may he expect to hear, when he is thus made to see something very extraordinary, but to signify the enlightning of his understanding with the knowledge of Christ. The devil comes to the soul in darkness, by it he gets and keeps possession of it. But Christ comes to the soul in light, for he is himself the *light of the world*, bright and glorious in himself, beneficial and gracious to us as light. The first thing in this new creation, as in that of the world, is light, *2 Cor.* iv. 6. Hence all Christians are said to be children *of the light and of the day*, *Eph.* v. 8.

(3.) The arresting of Saul, and his attachment, he *fell to the earth*, *ver.* 4. some think he was on foot, and this light which, perhaps, was accompanied with a thunder clap, so terrified him that he could not keep his feet, but fell upon his face, usually a posture of adoration, but here of astonishment. It is probable that he was mounted, as Balaam, when he went to curse Israel, and, perhaps, better mounted than he; for Saul was now in a publick post, was in haste, and the journey was long, so that it is not likely he should travel on foot. The sudden light would frighten the beast he rode on, and make it throw him; and it was God's good providence that his body got no hurt by the fall, but angels had a particular charge concerning him to *keep all his bones*, so that *not one of them was broken*. It appears, *Acts* xxvi. 14. that all that were with him *fell to the earth* as well as he, but the design was upon him.

1. As the effect of Christ's *appearing to him*, and of the light which shone round about him. Note, Christ's manifestations of himself to poor souls, are humbling, they lay them very low, in mean thoughts of themselves, and an humble submission to the will of God. Now *mine eyes see thee*, saith *Job*, *I labour myself*. *I saw the Lord*, saith *Isaiah*, *sitting upon a throne*, and I said, *wo is me, for I am undone*.

2. As a step towards his intended advancement. He is designed not only to be a Christian, but to be a minister, an apostle, a great apostle, and therefore he must thus be cast down. Note, Those whom Christ designs for the greatest honours, are commonly first laid low. Those that are designed to excel in knowledge and grace, are commonly laid low first, in a sense of their own ignorance and sinfulness. Those whom God will employ, are first struck with a sense of their unworthiness to be employed.

(4.) The arraignment of Saul. Being by the fall taken into custody, and as it were set to the bar, he *heard a voice saying to him*, (and it was distinguishing to him only, for though they that were with him heard a sound, *ver. 7.* yet they knew not the words, *chap. xxii. 9.*) *Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me?* Observe here,

1. *Saul not only saw a light from heaven, but heard a voice from heaven*: wherever the glory of God was seen, the word of God was heard, as *Exod. xx. 18.* and to Moses, *Num. vii. 6.* and to the prophets; God's manifestations of himself were never dumb shews, for he *magnifies his word above all his name*, and what was seen was always designed to make way for what was said: *Saul heard a voice.* Note, Faith comes by hearing; hence the Spirit is said to be *received by the hearing of faith*, *Gal. iii. 2.* The voice he heard was the voice of Christ: when he *saw that just One, he heard the voice of his mouth*, *Acts xxii. 14.* Note, Then the word we hear is likely to profit us when we hear it as the *voice of Christ*, *1 Thes. ii. 13.* *It is the voice of my beloved*; no voice but his can reach the heart. Seeing and hearing are the two learning senses, Christ here, by both those doors, entered into Saul's heart.

2. What he heard was very awakening.

1. He was called by his name, and that doubled, *Saul, Saul*, some think, in calling him Saul, he hints at that great persecuter of David, whose name he bore. He was indeed a second Saul, and such an enemy to the Son of David, as he was to David. Calling him by his name, intimates the particular regard that Christ had to him, *I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me*, *Isa. xlv. 4.* see *Exod. xxxiii. 12.* His calling him by name, brought the conviction home to his conscience, and put it past dispute to whom the voice spoke this. Note, What God speaks in general is then likely to do us good, when we apply it to ourselves, and insert our own names into the precepts and promises which are expressed generally; as if God spoke to us by name, and when he saith *Ho every one*, he had said, *Ho such a one*; *Samuel, Samuel. Saul, Saul.*

The doubling of it *Saul, Saul*, intimates, 1. The deep sleep that Saul was in, he needed to be called again and again, as *Jer. xxii. 29.* *O earth, earth, earth.* 2. The tender concern that the blessed Jesus had for him, and for his recovery; he speaks as one in earnest, it is like *Martha, Martha*, *Luke x. 41.* or *Simon, Simon*, *Luke xxii. 31.* or, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, *Mat. xxii. 37.* He speaks to him as to one in imminent danger, at the pit's brink, and just ready to drop in; *Saul, Saul*, dost thou know whither thou art going, and what thou art doing.

2. The charge exhibited against him is, *Why persecutest thou me?* Observe here, 1. Before Saul is made a saint, he is made to see himself a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner against Christ. Now he was made to see that evil by himself which he never saw before, *sin revived and he died.* Note, A humbling conviction of sin is the first step towards a saving conversion from sin. 2. He is convinced of one particular sin, which he was most notoriously guilty of, and had justified himself in, and thereby way is made for his conviction of all the rest. 3. The sin he is convinced of is persecution, *Why persecutest thou me.* It is a very affectionate expostulation, enough to melt a heart of stone. Observe, 1. The person sinning; it is thou; thou that art not one of the ignorant, rude, unthinking croud, that will run down any thing that they hear put into an ill name, but thou hast had a liberal, learned education, hast good parts and accomplishments, hast the knowledge of the scriptures, which, if duly considered, would shew thee the folly of it. It is worse in thee than in another. 2. The *person sinned against*; it is me, who never did thee any harm, who came from heaven to earth to do thee good; who was not long since crucified for thee, and was not that enough, but must I afresh be crucified by thee? 3. The kind and continuance of the sin: It was persecution, and he was at this time engaged in it; not only thou *hast persecuted*, but thou *persecutest*, thou persistest in it. He was not at this time halting any to prison, or killing them: But that was the errand he came upon to Damascus; he was now projecting it, and pleasing himself with the thought of it. Note, They that are designing mischief, are in God's account doing mischief. 4. The question put to him upon it, *why dost thou do it?* 1. It is complaining language; Why dealest thou thus unjustly, thus unkindly with my disciples? Christ never complained so much of those who persecuted him in his own person, as he did here of those who persecuted him in his followers. He complains of it as it was Saul's sin, why art thou such an enemy to thy self, to thy God. Note, The sins of sinners are a very grievous burthen to the Lord Jesus. He is grieved for them, *Mark iii. 5.* he is *pressed under them*, *Amos ii. 13.* 2. It is convincing language; Why dost thou thus? canst thou give any good reason for it? Note, It is good for us often to ask ourselves why

we do so, and so? that we may discern what an unreasonable thing sin is. And of all sins done so unreasonable, so unaccountable, as the sin of persecuting the disciples of Christ, especially when it is discovered to be, as certainly it is, persecuting Christ. Those have *no knowledge who eat up God's people*, *Psal. xiv. 4.* *Why persecutest thou me?* He thought he was only persecuting a company of poor, weak, silly people, that were an offence and eye-sore to the Pharisees, little imagining that it was one in heaven that he was all this while insulting; for, surely, if he had known, *he would not have persecuted the Lord of glory.* Note, Those who persecute the saints, persecute Christ himself, and he takes what is done against them, as done against himself, and accordingly will be the judgment in the great day, *Mat. xxv. 45.*

(5.) Saul's question upon his indictment, and the reply to it, *ver. 5.*

1. He makes enquiry concerning Christ. *Who art thou Lord?* he gives no direct answer to the charge preferred against him, being convicted by his own conscience, and self-condemned. If God contend with us for our sins, we are not able to answer for one of a thousand, especially such a one as the sin of persecution. Convictions of sin, when they are set home with power upon the conscience, will silence all excuses, and self justifications: *Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer.* But he desires to know who is his judge; the compellation is respectful. Lord; he who had been a blasphemer of Christ's name, now speaks to him as his Lord. The question is proper, *Who art thou?* This implies his present unacquaintedness with Christ, he *knew not his voice* as his own sheep do; but he desires to be acquainted with him; he is convinced by this light which encloseth him, that it is one from heaven that speaks to him, and he has a veneration for every thing that appears to him to come from heaven, and therefore, *Lord, who art thou?* What is thy name? *Judg. xiii. 17.* *Gen. xxxii. 29.* Note, There is then some hopes of people when they begin to enquire after Jesus Christ.

2. He has an answer immediately, in which we have,

1. Christ's gracious revelation of himself to him. He is always ready to answer the serious enquiries of those who covet an acquaintance with him. *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* The name of Jesus was not unknown to him, his heart had risen at it many a time, and gladly would he bury it in oblivion, he knew it was the name that he persecuted, but little did he think to hear it from heaven, or from the midst of such a glory as now shone round about him. Note, Christ brings souls into fellowship with himself, by manifesting himself to them. He said, 1. *I am Jesus, a Saviour.* *I am Jesus of Nazareth*, so it is, *Acts xxii. 8.* Saul used to call him so when he blasphemed him; I am that very Jesus whom thou usedst to call in scorn Jesus of Nazareth. And he would shew that now he is in glory, he is not ashamed of his humiliation. 2. *I am that Jesus whom thou persecutest*, and therefore it is at thy peril if thou persist in this wicked course. There is nothing more effectual to awaken and humble the soul, than to see sin to be against Christ, an affront to him, and a contradiction to his designs.

2. His gentle reproof of him. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, or goads*; to spurn at the spur. It is hard, *i. e.* it is in itself an absurd and evil thing, and will be of fatal consequence to him that doth it. Those kick at the goad that stifle and smother the convictions of conscience, that rebel against God's truths, and laws, that quarrel with his providences, and that persecute and oppose his ministers, because they reprove them, and their words are *as goads and as nails.* They that revolt more and more when they are stricken by the word or rod of God, that are enraged at reproofs, and fly in the face of their reprovers, they *kick against the pricks*, and will have a deal to answer for.

(6.) His surrender of himself to the Lord Jesus, at length, *ver. 6.* See here,

1. The frame and temper he was in, when Christ had been dealing with him. 1. He trembled as one in a great fright. Note, Strong convictions set home by the blessed Spirit, will make an awakened soul to tremble. How can those chuse but tremble, that are made to see the eternal God provoked against them, the whole creation at war with them, and their own souls upon the brink of ruin! 2. He was astonished, was filled with amazement, as one brought into a new world, that knew not where he was. Note, The convincing, converting work of Christ is astonishing to the awakened soul, and fills it with admiration. What is this that God has done with me? And what will he do?

2. His address to Jesus Christ when he was in this frame, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* which may be taken, 1. As a serious request for Christ's teachings. Lord I see, I have hitherto been out of the way, thou that hast shewed me my error, set me to rights; thou that hast discovered sin to me, discover to me the way to pardon and peace; it is like that, *Men and brethren*, What must we do? Note, A serious desire to be instructed by Christ in the way of salvation, is an evidence of a good work begun in the soul. Or, 2. As a sincere resignation of himself to the conduct and government of the Lord Jesus. This was the first word that grace spoke in Paul, and with this began a spiritual life, Lord Jesus, *What wilt thou have me to do?* Did not he know what he had to do? Had he not his commission in his pocket, and what had he to do but to execute it? No, he had done enough of this work already, and resolves

resolves now to change his master, and employ himself better ; now it is not, What will the high priest and the elders have me to do ? What will my own wicked appetites and passions have me to do ? but, *What wilt thou have me to do ?* The great change in conversion is wrought upon the will, and consists in the resignation of that to the will of Christ.

3. The general direction Christ gave him, in answer to this : *Arise, go into the city of Damascus, which thou art now near to, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* It is encouragement enough to have further instruction promised him, but, 1. He must not have it yet ; *it shall be told him shortly what he must do*, but, for the present, he must pause upon what has been said to him, and improve that : Let him consider a while what he has done in persecuting Christ, and be deeply humbled for that, and then he *shall be told what he has further to do.* 2. He must not have it in *this way*, by a voice from heaven, for it is plain he cannot bear it, *he trembles, and is astonished* ; he *shall be told*, therefore, *what he must do*, by a man like himself, whose terror *shall not make him afraid*, nor *his hand be heavy upon him* ; which Israel desired at mount Sinai. Or, it is an intimation that Christ would take some other time to manifest himself further to him, when he was more composed, and this fright pretty well over : Christ manifests himself to his people by degrees ; and both *what he doth*, and would have them to do, though *they know not now, they shall know hereafter.*

(7.) How far his fellow-travellers were affected with this, and what impression it made upon them : *They fell to the earth*, as he did, but rose without being bidden, which he did not, but lay still till it was said to him, *Arise* ; for he lay under a heavier load than any of them did ; but when they were up,

1. *They stood speechless*, as men in confusion, and that was all, *ver. 7.* They were going on the same wicked errand that Paul was, and, perhaps, to the best of their power, were as spiteful as he ; yet we do not find that any of them were converted, though *they saw the light*, and were struck down, and struck dumb by it : No external means will, of themselves, work a change in the soul, without *the Spirit and grace of God* ; which distinguisheth between some and others : Among these that journeyed together, *one is taken, and the other left* : *They stood speechless* ; none of them said, *Who art thou, Lord ?* or, *What wilt thou have me to do ?* as Paul did : But none of God's children are born dumb.

2. *They heard a voice, but saw no man* ; they heard Paul speak, but saw not him to whom he spoke, nor heard distinctly what was said to him ; which reconciles it with what is said of this matter, *chap. xxii. 9.* where it is said, *they saw the light, and were afraid* ; which they might do, and yet *see no man in the light*, as Paul did ; and *that they heard not the voice of him that spake to Paul*, so as to understand what he said, though they did hear a confused noise. Thus they who came hither to be the instruments of Paul's rage against the church, serve for witnesses of the power of God over him.

(8.) What condition Saul was in after this, *ver. 8, 9.*

1. *He arose from the earth*, when Christ bid him, but, probably, not without help, the vision had made him so fainty and weak, I will not say, like Belshazzar, *when the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another*, but like Daniel, *when, upon the sight of a vision, no strength remained in him*, *Dan. x. 16, 17.*

2. *When his eyes were opened*, he found that his sight was gone, and *he saw no man*, none of the men that were with him, and began now to be busy about him. It was not so much this glaring light, that, by dazzling his eyes, had dimmed them ; *Nimirum sensibile lædit sensum* ; for then *those with him* would have lost their sight too ; but it was a sight of Christ, whom the rest saw not, that had this effect upon him. Thus a believing sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ dazzles the eyes to all things here below. Christ, in order to the further discovery of himself and his gospel to Paul, took him off from the sight of other things, which he must look off, that he may look unto Jesus, and to him only.

3. *They led him by the hand into Damascus*, whether to a publick house, or to some friend's house, is not certain ; but thus he, who thought to have led the disciples of Christ prisoners and captives to Jerusalem, was himself led a prisoner and a captive to Christ into Damascus. He was thus taught what need he had of the grace of Christ to lead his soul, being naturally blind, and apt to mistake, into all truth.

4. He lay without sight, and without food, *neither did eat nor drink for three days*, *ver. 9.* I do not think, as some do, that now he had his rapture into the third heavens, which he speaks of, *2 Cor. xii.* so far from that, that we have reason to think, he was all this time rather in the belly of hell, suffering God's terrors for his sins, which were now set in order before him : He was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and was so wounded in spirit for sin, that he could relish *neither meat nor drink.*

10. ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and to him said the Lord in a vision,

Ananias, And he said, Behold, I am here Lord. 11. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street, which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas, for one called Saul of Tarsus : for behold, he prayeth, 12. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem : 14. And here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name. 15. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. 16. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my names sake. 17. And Ananias went his way, and entred into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the holy Ghost. 18. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales ; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21. But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests ? 22. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

As for God his work is perfect ; if he begin, he will make an end ; a good work was begun in Saul, when he was brought to Christ's feet in that word, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? and never did Christ leave any that were brought to that. Though Saul was sadly mortified when he lay three days blind, yet he was not abandoned ; Christ here takes care of the work of his own hands ; he that hath torn, will heal ; that hath smitten, will bind up ; that has convinced, will comfort.

First, Ananias is here ordered to go and look after him, to heal and help him, for he that causeth grief, will have compassion.

1. The person employed is Ananias, a certain disciple at Damascus, not lately driven thither from Jerusalem, but a native of Damascus, for it is said, *Acts xxii. 12.* that he had a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, as a devout man according to the law ; he had lately embraced the gospel, and given up his name to Christ, and, as it should seem, officiated as a minister, at least, *pro hac vice*, though it doth not appear he was apostolically ordained. But why were not some of the apostles from Jerusalem sent for upon this great occasion ? or Philip the evangelist, who had lately baptized the eunuch, and might have been fetched hither by the Spirit in a little time ? Surely, because Christ would employ variety of hands in eminent services, that the honours might not be monopolized, or engrossed by a few ; and would put work into the hands, and thereby put honour upon the heads, of those that were mean and obscure, to encourage them ; and would direct us to make much of the ministers that are where our lot is cast, if they have obtained mercy to be faithful, though they are not of the most eminent.

2. The direction given him is to go and enquire at such a house, probably, an inn, for one Saul of Tarsus : Christ, in a vision, called to Ananias by name, *ver. 10.* It is likely, it was not the first time that he had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty, for, without terror or confusion, he readily answers, Behold, I am here Lord, ready to go wherever thou sendest me, and do whatever thou biddest me : Go then, saith Christ, into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas, where strangers used to lodge, for one called Saul of Tarsus. Note, Christ very well knows where to find out those that are his in their distresses : When their relations, it may be, know not what is become of them, they have a friend in heaven that knows in what street, in what house, nay, and which is more, in what frame they are : He knows their souls in adversity.

3. Two reasons are given him, why he must go and enquire for this stranger, and offer him his service :

(1.) Because he prays, and his coming to him must answer his prayer. This is a reason, 1. Why Ananias needed not to be afraid of him, as we find he was, *ver. 13, 14.* There is no question, saith Christ, but he is a true convert, for behold, he prays. Behold, notes the certainty of it, assure thyself it is so ; go, and see else. Christ was so pleased to find Paul praying, that he must have

have others to take notice of it : *Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which I had lost.* It notes also the strangeness of it ; *behold, and wonder, that he who but the other day breathed nothing but threatnings and slaughter, now breathes nothing but prayer.* But was it such a strange thing for Saul to pray ? Was he not a Pharisee, and have we not reason to think he did as the rest of them did, make long prayers in the synagogues, and the corners of the streets ? Yes ; but now he began to pray after another manner than he had done : Then he said his prayers, now he prayed them. Note, Regenerating grace evermore sets people on praying ; you may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer : If breathless, lifeless ; and so if prayerless, graceless. 2. As a reason why Ananias must go to him with all speed ; it is no time to linger, *for behold, he prays* : If the child cry, the tender nurse hastens to it with the breast. Saul here, like Ephraim, is bemoaning himself, reproaching himself, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and kicking against the goad. O ! go to to him quickly, and tell him, *he is a dear son, a pleasant child, and since I spake against him, for persecuting me, I do earnestly remember him still,* Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20. Observe, What condition Saul was now in ; he was under conviction of sin, trembling, and astonished : *The setting of sin in order before us, should drive us to prayer.* He was under a bodily affliction, blind, and sick ; and, *Is any afflicted ? let him pray.* Christ had promised him, *that it should be further told him what he should do,* ver. 6. and *he prays* that one may be sent to him to instruct him. Note, What God has promised, we must pray for ; *he will for this be enquired of ;* and particularly for divine instruction.

(2.) Because *he hath seen in a vision such a man coming to him, to restore him to his sight, and Ananias's coming to him must answer his dream, for it was of God,* ver. 12. *He hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, and just such a man as thou art, coming in seasonably for his relief, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.* Now this vision Paul had, may be considered, 1. As an immediate answer to his prayer, and the keeping up of that communion with God which he had entered into by prayer. He had, in prayer, spread the misery of his own case before God ; and God presently manifests himself, and the kind intentions of his grace to him : And it is very encouraging, to know God's thoughts to us-ward. 2. As designed to raise his expectations, and to make Ananias's coming more welcome to him : He would readily receive him as a messenger from God, when he was told beforehand in vision that one of that name would come to him. See what a great thing it is to bring a spiritual physician and his patient together ; here are two visions in order to it ! When God, in his providence, doth it without visions, brings a messenger to the afflicted soul, *an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness,* it must be acknowledged with thankfulness to his praise.

Secondly, Ananias objects against going to him, and the Lord answers the objection. See how condescendingly the Lord admits his servant to reason with him !

1. Ananias pleads, that this Saul was a notorious persecutor of the disciples of Christ, ver. 13, 14. 1. He had been so at Jerusalem ; *Lord, I have heard by many of this man, what a malicious enemy he is to the gospel of Christ ; all those that were scattered upon the late persecution, many of whom are come to Damascus, tell, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem ; that he was the most virulent, violent persecutor of all the rest, and a ringleader in the mischief ; what havoc he has made of the church ; there was no man they were more afraid of, no, not the high-priest himself, than of Saul ; nay, 2. His errand to Damascus at this time is to persecute us Christians ; here he has authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name ; to treat the worshippers of Christ as the worst of criminals.* Now why doth Ananias object this ? Not, therefore I do not owe him so much service ; why should I do him a kindness, who has done, and designed us so much unkindness ? No, Christ has taught us another lesson, to render good for evil, and pray for our persecutors ; but, if he be such a persecutor of Christians, (1.) Will it be safe for Ananias to go to him ? Will he throw himself like a lamb into the mouth of the lion ? And if he thus bring himself into trouble, he will be blamed for his indiscretion. (2.) Will it be to any purpose to go to him ? Can such a hard heart ever be softened ? or such an *Ethiopian* ever change his skin ?

2. Christ over-rules the objection, ver. 16, 17. Do not tell me how bad he has been, I know it very well, but *go thy way with all speed, and give him all the help thou canst, for he is a chosen vessel, or instrument, unto me ; I design to put a confidence in him, and then thou needst not fear him : He was a vessel in which the gospel treasure should be lodged, in order to the conveyance of it to many ; an earthen vessel, 2 Cor. iv. 7. but a chosen vessel.* The vessel God useth, he himself chooseth ; and it is fit he should himself have the choosing of the instruments he employs, *John xv. 16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* He is a vessel of honour, and must not be neglected in his present forlorn condition, or thrown away as a despised broken vessel, or a vessel in which there is no pleasure : He is designed, 1. For eminent services ; *he is to bear my name before the Gentiles, is to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and to carry the gospel to heathen nations : Christ's*

name is the standard to which souls must be gathered, and under which they must be listed, and Saul must be a standard-bearer, he must bear Christ's name, i. e. must bear witness to it before kings, king Agrippa, and Cesar himself ; nay, he must bear it before the children of Israel, though there were so many hands already at work about them. 2. For eminent sufferings, ver. 16. *I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my names sake :* He that has been a persecutor, shall be himself persecuted. Christ's shewing him this, intimates, either his bringing him to these trials, as Psalm lx. 3. *Thou hast shewed thy people hard things ;* or his giving him notice of them beforehand, that they might be no surprise to him. Note, Those that bear Christ's name, must expect to bear the cross for his name ; and those that do most for Christ, are often called out to suffer most for him : *Saul must suffer great things.* This, one would think, was cold comfort for a young convert ; but it is but like telling a soldier of a bold and brave spirit, when he is listed, that he shall take the field, and enter upon action shortly ! Saul's sufferings for Christ shall redound so much to the honour of Christ, and the service of the church, shall be so balanced with spiritual comforts, and recompensed with eternal glories, that it is no discouragement to him to be told *how great things he must suffer for Christ's name's sake.*

Thirdly, Ananias presently goes on Christ's errand to Saul, and with good effect : He had started an objection against going to him, but when an answer was given to it, he dropped it, and did not insist upon it. When difficulties are removed, what have we to do, but to go on with our work, and not hang upon an objection ?

1. Ananias delivered his message to Saul, ver. 17. Probably, he found him in bed, and applied to him as a patient ; 1. *He put his hands on him.* It was promised, as one of the signs that should follow them that believe, that *they should lay hands on the sick, and they should recover,* Mark xvi. 18. and it was for that intent that *he put his hands on him.* Saul came to lay violent hands upon the disciples at Damascus, but here a disciple lays a helping, healing hand upon him : *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.* 2. He called him brother, because he was made a partaker of the grace of God, though not yet baptized ; and his readiness to own him as a brother, intimated to him God's readiness to own him as a son, though he had been a blasphemer of God, and a persecutor of his children. 3. He produceth his commission from the same hand that had laid hold on him by the way, and now had him in custody. That same Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, and convinced thee of thy sin in persecuting him, has now sent me to thee to comfort thee. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit.* His light struck thee blind, but he hath sent me to thee that thou mightest receive thy sight ; for the design was not to blind thine eyes, but to dazzle them, that thou mightest see things by another light : He that then put clay upon thine eyes, hath sent me to wash them, that they may be cured. Ananias might deliver his message to Saul very appositely in the prophet's words, *Hosai vi. 1, 2. Come, and turn to the Lord, for he will turn, and he will heal thee ; he hath smitten, and he will bind thee up ; now after two days he will revive thee, and the third day he will raise thee up, and thou shalt live in his sight :* Corrosives shall be no more applied, but lenitives. 4. He assures him that he shall not only have his sight restored, but *be filled with the holy Ghost :* He must himself be an apostle, and must in nothing come behind the chief of the apostles, and therefore must receive the holy Ghost immediately, and not, as others did, by the interposition of the apostles ; and Ananias's putting his hands upon him before he was baptized, was not for the conferring of the holy Ghost.

2. Ananias saw the good issue of his mission :

(1.) In Christ's favour to Saul ; at the word of Ananias, Saul was discharged from his confinement, by the restoring of his sight ; for Christ's commission to *open the prison to them that were bound,* (Isa. lxi. 1.) is explained by the giving of sight to the blind, Luke iv. 18. and Isa. xlii. 7. Christ's commission is to *open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison.* Saul is delivered from the spirit of bondage, by his receiving sight, ver. 18. which was signified by the falling of scales from his eyes ; and this immediately, and forthwith : The cure was sudden, to shew that it was miraculous. This signified the recovering of him, 1. From the darkness of his unconverted state ; when he persecuted the church of God, and walked in the spirit and way of the Pharisees, he was blind, he saw not the meaning, either of the law, or of the gospel, Rom. vii. 9. Christ often told the Pharisees they were blind, and could not make them sensible of it ; they said, *We see,* John ix. 41. Saul is saved from his Pharisaical blindness, by being made sensible of it. Note, Converting grace opens the eyes of the soul, and makes the scales to fall from them, Acts xxiv. 18. *to open mens eyes, and turn them from darkness to light :* This was it that Saul was sent among the Gentiles to do, by the preaching of the gospel, and therefore must first experience it in himself. 2. From the darkness of his present terrors, under the apprehension of guilt upon his conscience, and the wrath of God against him ; this filled him with confusion, during those three days he sat in darkness, like Jonah for three days in the belly of hell ; but now the scales fell from his eyes, the cloud was scattered, and the sun

sun of righteousness rose, upon his soul, with healing under his wings.

(2.) In Saul's subjection to Christ; *he was baptized*, and thereby submitted himself to the government of Christ, and cast himself upon the grace of Christ: Thus he was entered into Christ's school, hired into his family, lifted under his banner, and joined himself to him for better for worse. The point was gained, it is settled; Saul is now a disciple of Christ, not only ceaseth to oppose him, but devotes himself entirely to his service and honour.

Fourthly, The good work that was begun in Saul, is carried on wonderfully; this new-born Christian, though he seemed *as one born out of due time*, yet presently comes to maturity.

1. He received his bodily strength, *ver. 19.* He had continued three days fasting, which, with the mighty weight that was all that time upon his spirits, had made him very weak; but *when he had received meat, he was strengthened*, *ver. 19.* The Lord is for the body, and therefore care must be taken of that to keep it in good plight, that it may be fit to serve the soul in God's service, and that Christ may be magnified in it, *Phil. i. 20.*

2. He associated with the disciples that were at Damascus, fell in with them, conversed with them, went to their meetings, and joined in communion with them: He had lately *breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them*, but now *breathes love and affection to them*: Now *the wolf dwells with the lamb*, and *the leopard lies down with the kid*, *Isa. xi. 6.* Note, Those that take God for their God, take his people for their people. Saul associated with the disciples, because now he saw an amiableness and excellency in them, because he loved them, and found that he improved in knowledge and grace by conversing with them; and thus he made profession of his Christian faith, and openly declared himself a disciple of Christ, by herding with those that were his disciples.

3. *He preached Christ in the synagogues*, *ver. 20.* To this he had an extraordinary call, and for it an extraordinary qualification, God having immediately *revealed his Son* to him, and *in him, that he might preach him*, *Gal. i. 15, 16.* He was so full of Christ himself, that *the Spirit within him constrained him* to preach him to others, and, like Elihu, *to speak, that he might be refreshed*, *Job xxxii. 18.* Observe, 1. Where he preached; *in the synagogues of the Jews*; for they were to have the first offer made them; *the synagogues* were their places of concourse, there he met with them together, and there they used to preach against Christ, and to punish his disciples; by the same token that Paul himself *had punished them oft in every synagogue*, *Acts xxvi. 11.* and therefore there he would face the enemies of Christ, where they were most daring; and openly profess Christianity there, where he had most opposed it. 2. What he preached; *he preached Christ*: When he begun to be a preacher, he fixed that for his principle, which he stuck to ever after, *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; nothing but Christ, and him crucified*: He preached concerning Christ, *that he is the Son of God, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased*, and with us in him, and not otherwise. 3. How people were affected with it, *ver. 21.* *All that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem?* and now doth he call on this name himself, and persuade others to call upon it, and strengthen the hands of those that do! *Quantum mutatus ab illo! Is Saul also among the prophets?* Nay, did he not *come hither for that intent*, to seize all the Christians he could find, and *bring them bound to the chief priests*? Yes, he did: Who would have thought then, that he should *preach Christ* as he doth? Doubtless, this was looked upon by many as a great confirmation of the truth of Christianity, that one, who had been such a notorious persecutor of it, came, on a sudden, to be such an intelligent, strenuous, and capacious preacher of it. This miracle upon the mind of such a man, outshone the miracles upon mens bodies; and giving a man such another heart, was more than giving men to speak *with other tongues*.

4. He confuted and confounded those that opposed the doctrine of Christ, *ver. 22.* He not only signalized himself in the pulpit, but in the schools, and shewed himself supernaturally enabled, not only to *preach the truth*, but to maintain and defend it when he had preached it. 1. He *increased in strength*; he became more intimately acquainted with the gospel of Christ, and his pious affections grew more strong; he grew more bold, and daring, and resolute in the defence of the gospel; *he increased the more*, for the reflexions that were cast upon him, *ver. 21.* in which his new friends upbraided him as having been a persecutor, and his old friends upbraided him as being now a turncoat; but Saul, instead of being discouraged by the various remarks made upon his conversion, was thereby so much the more emboldened, finding he had enough at hand wherewith to answer the worst they could say of him. 2. He ran down his antagonists, and *confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus*; he silenced them, and shamed them; answered their objections to the satisfaction of all indifferent persons, and pressed them with arguments which they could make no reply to: In all his discourses *with the Jews*, he was still *proving that this Jesus is very Christ, is the Christ, the Anointed of God, the true Messiah promised to the fathers*: He was proving it, *συμμετέλω*, affirming it, and confirming it; teaching

with persuasion: And, we have reason to think, he was instrumental to convert many to the faith of Christ, and to build up the church at Damascus, which he came thither to make havock of. *Thus out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.*

23. ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24. But their laying await was known of Saul: and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. 26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem; he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28. And he was with them coming in, and going out at Jerusalem. 29. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Luke here makes no mention of Paul's journey into Arabia, which he tells us himself was immediately after his conversion, *Gal. i. 16, 17.* As soon as God *had revealed his Son in him, that he might preach him, he went not up to Jerusalem*, to receive instructions from the apostles, as any other convert would have done; that was designed for the ministry, but he went to Arabia, where there was new ground to break up, and where he would have opportunity of teaching, but not of learning; thence he returned to Damascus, and there, three years after his conversion, this happened, which is here recorded.

First, He met with difficulties at Damascus, and had a narrow escape of being killed there. Observe,

1. What his danger was, *ver. 23.* *The Jews took counsel to kill him*, being more enraged at him, than at any other of the preachers of the gospel; not only because he was more lively and zealous in his preaching than any of them, and more successful, but because he had been such a remarkable deserter, and his being a Christian was a testimony against them. It is said, *ver. 24.* *The Jews watched the gates day and night to kill him*; they incensed the governor against him, as a dangerous man, who therefore *kept the city with a guard to apprehend him*, at his going out, or coming in, *2 Cor. xi. 32.* Now Christ shewed Paul *what great things he must suffer for his name*, *ver. 16.* when here is presently the government in arms against him, which was a *great thing*, and, as all his other sufferings afterwards, helped to make him considerable. Saul was no sooner a Christian, but a preacher; no sooner a preacher, but a sufferer; so quick did he rise to the top of his preferment! Note, Where God gives great grace, he commonly exercises it with great trials.

2. How he was delivered: 1. The design against him was discovered; *their lying in wait was known of Saul*, by some intelligence, whether from heaven, or from men, we are not told. 2. *The disciples contrived to help him away*, hid him, it is likely, by day, and *in the night, the gates being watched*, that he could not get away through them, *they let him down by the wall in a basket*, as he himself relates it, *2 Cor. xi. 33.* *so he escaped out of their hands.* This story, as it shews us, that when we enter into the way of God, we must look for temptation, and prepare accordingly; so it shews us, *that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may not be by it deterred or driven from the way of God.*

Secondly, He met with difficulties at Jerusalem, the first time he went thither, *ver. 26.* *He came to Jerusalem.* This is thought to be that journey to Jerusalem, which he himself speaks of, *Gal. i. 18.* *After three years I went up to Jerusalem (saith he) to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.* But I rather incline to think, that this was a journey before that, because *his coming in, and going out, his preaching, and disputing*, *ver. 28, 29.* seems to be more than would consist with his *fifteen days* stay (for that was no more) and to require a longer time; and, besides, now he came a stranger, but then he came, *ισογύς πέτρῳ*, to confer with Peter, as one he was intimate with; however, it might possibly be the same. Now observe,

(1.) How shy his friends were of him, *ver. 26.* *When he came to Jerusalem, he did not go to the chief priests, and the Pharisees, he had taken his leave of them long since, but he desired to join himself to the disciples*; wherever he came he owned himself

one of that despised, persecuted people, and associated with them; they were now in his eyes *the excellent ones of the earth, in whom was all his delight*; he desired to be acquainted with them, and to be admitted into communion with them; but they looked strange upon him, shut the door against him, and would not go about any of their religious exercises if he were by; for *they were afraid of him*. Now might Paul be tempted to think himself in an ill case, when the Jews had abandoned and persecuted him, and the Christians would not receive and entertain him. Thus doth he fall into divers temptations, and needs *the armour of righteousness*, as we all do, both *on the right hand, and on the left*, that we may not be discouraged, either by the unjust treatment of our enemies, or the unkind treatment of our friends.

1. See what was the cause of their jealousy of him; *they believed not that he was a disciple*, but that he only pretended to be so, and came among them as a spy, or an informer: They knew what a bitter persecutor he had been, with what fury he went to Damascus some time ago, had heard nothing of him since, and therefore thought he was but a wolf in sheep's clothing. The disciples of Christ had need to be cautious whom they admit into communion with them: *Believe not every spirit*. There is need of the wisdom of the serpent to keep the mean between the extremes of suspicion on the one hand, and credulity on the other; yet, methinks, it is safer to err on the charitable side, because it is an adjudged case, that it is better *the tares* should be found among the *wheat*, than that *the wheat* should any of it be *rooted up*, and thrown out of *the field*.

2. See how it was removed, *ver. 27*. Barnabas took him to the *apostles* themselves, who were not so scrupulous as the inferior *disciples*, to whom he first assayed to join himself, and he declared to them, (1.) What Christ had done for him, *had shewed himself to him in the way, and spoken to him, and what he said*. (2.) What he had since done for Christ; *had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus*. How Barnabas came to know this, more than the rest of them, we are not told; whether he had himself been at Damascus, or had had letters from thence, or discoursed with some of that city, by which he came to the knowledge of this; or whether he had formerly been acquainted with Paul in the Grecian synagogues, or at *the feet of Gamaliel*, and had such an account of his conversion from himself, as he saw cause enough to give credit to; so it was, that, being satisfied himself, he gave satisfaction to the *apostles* concerning him, he having brought no testimonials from *the disciples at Damascus*, thinking *he needed not*, as some others, *epistles of commendation*, 2 Cor. iii. 1. Note, The introducing of a young convert into the communion of the faithful, is a very good work, and which, as we have opportunity, we should be ready to.

(2.) How sharp his enemies were upon him:

1. He was admitted into the communion of *the disciples*, which was no little provocation to his enemies: It vexed *the unbelieving Jews*, to see Saul a trophy of Christ's victory, and a captive to his grace, who had been such a champion for their cause; to see him *coming in, and going out with the apostles*, *ver. 28*. and to hear them glorying in him, or, rather, glorifying God in him.

2. He appeared vigorous in the cause of Christ, and this was yet more provoking to them, *ver. 29*. *He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Note, Those that speak for Christ, have reason to speak boldly; for they have a good cause, and speak for one who will at last speak for himself, and them too. The Grecians, or Hellenist Jews, were most offended at him, because he had been one of them; and they drew him into a dispute, in which, no doubt, he was too hard for them, as he had been for the Jews at Damascus. One of the martyrs said, Though she could not *dispute for Christ*, she could *die for Christ*; but Paul could do both. Now the Lord Jesus *divided the spoils of the strong man armed* in Saul: For that same natural quickness and fervour of spirit, which, while he was in ignorance and unbelief, made him a furious, bigotted persecutor of the faith, made him a most zealous, courageous defender of the faith.

3. This brought him into peril of his life, with which he narrowly escaped: *The Grecians*, when they found they could not deal with him in disputation, contrived to silence him another way; *they went about to slay him*, as they did Stephen, when *they could not resist the spirit by which he spake*, Acts vi. 10. That is a bad cause that has recourse to persecution for its last argument. But notice was given of this conspiracy too, and effectual care taken to secure this young champion, *ver. 30*. *When the brethren knew what was designed against him, they brought him down to Cesarea*: They remembered how the putting of Stephen to death, upon his disputing with *the Grecians*, had been the beginning of a sore persecution; and therefore were afraid of having such a vein opened again, and hastened Paul out of the way. He that flies, may fight again; he that fled from Jerusalem, might do service at Tarsus, the place of his nativity; and thither they desired him by all means to go, in hopes he might go on in his work with more safety than at Jerusalem. Yet it was also by direction from heaven that he left Jerusalem at this time, as he tells us himself, Acts xii. 17, 18. that Christ now appeared to him, and ordered him to *go quickly out of Jerusalem, for he must be sent to the Gentiles*, *ver. 21*. Those, by whom God has work to do, shall be prote-

cted from all the designs of their enemies against them, till it is done: *Christ's witnesses* cannot be slain, till *they have finished their testimony*.

Thirdly, *The churches* had now a comfortable gleam of liberty and peace, *ver. 31*. *Then had the churches rest*. Then, when Saul was converted, so some; when that persecutor was taken off, those were quiet whom he used to irritate; and then those were quiet whom he used to molest: Or, then, when he was gone from Jerusalem, the fury of the Grecian Jews was a little abated, and they were the more willing to bear with the other preachers, now Saul was gone out of the way. Observe,

1. *The churches had rest*: After a storm comes a calm. Though we are always to expect troublesome times, yet we may expect that they shall not last always. This was a breathing time allowed them, to prepare them for the next encounter. *The churches* that were already planted, were mostly in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, within the limits of the holy land: There were the first Christian churches, where Christ had himself laid the foundation.

2. They made a good use of this lucid interval; instead of growing secure and wanton in *the day of their prosperity*, they abounded more in their duty, and made a good use of their tranquillity. 1. *They were edified, were built up in their most holy faith*; the more free and constant enjoyment they had of the means of knowledge and grace, the more they increased in knowledge and grace. 2. *They walked in the fear of the Lord*; were more exemplary themselves for a holy, heavenly conversation: They lived so, as that all who conversed with them might say, *Surely the fear of God reigns in those people*. 3. *They walked in the comfort of the holy Ghost*; they were not only faithful, but cheerful in religion; they stuck to the ways of the Lord, and sang in those ways: *The comfort of the holy Ghost* was their consolation, and that which they made their chief joy: They had recourse to *the comfort of the holy Ghost*, and lived upon that, not only in days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity: The comforts of the earth, when they had the most free and full enjoyment of them, could not content them without *the comfort of the holy Ghost*. Observe the connexion of these two, when *they walked in the fear of the Lord*, then *they walked in the comfort of the holy Ghost*: Those are most likely to walk cheerfully, that walk circumspectly.

3. God blessed it to them for their increase in number; *they were multiplied*. Sometimes *the church multiplies* the more for its being afflicted, as Israel in Egypt; yet if it were always so, the saints of the most High would be worn out; at other times its rest contributes to its growth, as it enlargeth the opportunity of ministers, and invites those in, that, at first, are afraid of suffering: Or, then, when *they walked in the fear of God, and his comforts*, then *they were multiplied*. Thus they that will not be won by the word, may be won by the conversation of professors.

32. ¶ And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33. And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34. And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35. And all that dwelt at Lydda, and Saron, saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Here we have,

First, The visit Peter made to the churches that were newly planted by the dispersed preachers, *ver. 32*.

1. He *passed through all quarters*; as an apostle, he was not to be the resident pastor of any one church, but the itinerant visitor of many churches; to confirm the doctrine of inferior preachers, to confer *the holy Ghost on them that believed*, and to ordain ministers. He passed, *διὰ πάντων*, among them all, who pertained to *the churches* of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, mentioned in the foregoing chapter: He was, like his Master, always upon the remove, and *went about doing good*; but still his head quarters were at Jerusalem, for there we shall find him imprisoned, chap. xii.

2. *He came to the saints at Lydda*; this seems to be the same with Lod, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, mentioned 1 Chron. viii. 12. Ezra ii. 33. The Christians are called *saints*, not only some particular eminent ones, as saint Peter, and saint Paul, but every sincere professor of the faith of Christ: These are *the saints on the earth*, Psalm xvi. 3.

Secondly, The cure Peter wrought on Eneas, *a man that had been bedrid eight years*, *ver. 33*.

1. His case was very deplorable, *he was sick of the palsy*, a dumb palsy, perhaps, a dead palsy; the disease was extream, for *he kept his bed*; it was inveterate, for *he kept his bed eight years*; and, we may suppose, both he himself, and all about him, despaired of relief for him, and concluded upon no other, but that he must still keep his bed, till he removed to his grave. Christ chose such patients as those, whose diseases were incurable in a course of nature, to shew how desperate the case of fallen mankind was when he undertook their cure: When we were *without strength*, as this poor man, *he sent his word to heal us*.

2. His

2. His cure was very admirable, *ver. 34.* 1. Peter interested Christ in his case, and engaged him for his relief; *Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.* Peter doth not pretend to do it himself by any power of his own, but declares it to be Christ's act and deed, and directs him to look up to Christ for help, and assures him of an immediate cure; not he will make thee, but he doth make thee whole; and a perfect cure, not he makes thee easy, but he makes thee whole: he doth not express himself by way of prayer to Christ that he would make him whole, but as one having authority from Christ, and that knew his mind he declares him *made whole.* 2. He ordered him to bestir himself, to exert himself, *Arise, and make thy bed,* that all may see thou art thoroughly cured. Let none say, that because it is Christ that by the power of his grace works all our works in us, therefore we have no work, no duty to do; for though *Jesus Christ makes thee whole,* yet thou must *arise,* and make use of the power he gives thee. *Arise and make thy bed,* for another use than it has been, to be a bed of rest to thee, no longer a bed of sickness. 3. Power went along with this word, he *arose immediately,* and no doubt very willingly *made his own bed.*

Thirdly, The good influence this had upon many, *ver. 35.* *All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord.* We can scarce think that every individual person in those countries took cognizance of the miracle, and was wrought upon by it, but many, the generality of the people in the town of Lydda, and in the country of Saron, or Sharon, a fruitful plain or valley, of which it was foretold *Sharon shall be a fold of flocks,* Isa. lxxv. 10.

1. They all made enquiry into the truth of the miracle, did not overlook it, but saw him that was healed, and saw that it was a miraculous cure that was wrought upon him, by the power of Christ, and in his name, and with a design to confirm and ratify that doctrine of Christ which was now preached to the world.

2. They all submitted to the convincing proof and evidence there was in this of the divine original of the Christian doctrine, and *turned to the Lord;* to the Lord Jesus; they turned from Judaism to Christianity; they embraced the doctrine of Christ, and submitted to his ordinances; and turned themselves over to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him.

36. ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works, and alms deeds which she did. 27. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39. Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him, weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. 40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed, and turning him to the body, said Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41. And he gave her his hand, and lift her up: and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42. And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Here we have a greater miracle wrought by Peter, for the confirming of the gospel, and which exceeded the former; the raising of Tabitha to life, when she had been for some time dead. Here is,

First, The life, and death, and character of Tabitha, on whom this miracle was wrought, *ver. 36, 37.*

1. She lived at Joppa, a sea-port town in the tribe of Dan, where Jonah took shipping to go to Tarshish, now called Japho.

2. Her name was Tabitha, a Hebrew name, the Greek for which is Dorcas, both signifying a doe, or hind, or deer, a pleasant creature; Nephtali is compared to a *hind let loose, giving goodly words.* And the wife to the kind and tender husband, is as the loving hind, and as the pleasant roe, *Prov. v. 19.*

3. She was a disciple, one that had embraced the faith of Christ and was baptized; and not only so, but was eminent above many for works of charity; she shewed her faith by her works, her good works, which she was full of, that is, which she abounded in; her head was full of cares and contrivances which way she should do good. She *devised liberal things,* Isa. xxxii. 8. her hands were full of good employment, she made a business of doing good, was never idle, having learned to *maintain good works,* Tit. ii. 14. to keep up a constant course and method of them. She was full of

good works, as a tree that is full of fruit. Many are full of good words that are empty and barren in good works, but Tabitha was a great doer, no great talker; *non magna loquimur sed vivimus.* Among other good works, she was remarkable for her *alms-deeds which she did,* not only her works of piety, which are good works and the fruits of faith, but works of charity and beneficence, flowing from love to our neighbour, and a holy contempt of this world. Observe, She is praised not only for the alms which she gave, but for the alms-deeds which she did. Those that have not estates wherewith to give in charity, may yet be able to do in *charity, working with their hands,* or walking with their feet, for the benefit of the poor. And they who will not do a charitable deed whatever they may pretend, if they were rich, would not bestow a charitable gift. She was full of alms-deeds, *ἔνδοξοις, which she made;* there is an emphasis upon her doing them, because what her hand found to do of this kind she did *with all her might,* and persevered in. They were alms-deeds not which she purposed and designed; and said she would do, but *which she did;* not which she began to do, but which she did, which she went through with; which she *performed the doing of,* 2 Cor. viii. 11. ix. 7. This is the life and character of a certain disciple, and should agree to all the disciples of Christ; for if thus *we bear much fruit, then are we his disciples indeed,* John xv. 8.

4. She was removed in the midst of her usefulness, *ver. 37.* *in those days she fell sick and died.* It is promised to those who *consider the poor,* not that they shall *never be sick,* but the Lord will *strengthen them upon the bed of languishing,* at least with strength in their soul, and so will *make all their bed in their sickness,* will make it easy, *Psal. xli. 1, 3.* They cannot hope that they shall *never die, merciful men are taken away,* and merciful women too, witness Tabitha, but they may hope that they shall *find mercy of the Lord in that day,* 2 Tim. i. 18.

5. Her friends and those about her did not presently bury her as usual, because they were in hopes Peter would come and raise her to life again, but they *washed the dead body,* according to the custom, which they say was with warm water, which if there were any life remaining in the body would recover it; so that this was done to shew that she was really and truly dead; they tried all the usual methods to bring her to life and could not. *Conclamatum est.* They laid her out in her grave-clothes in an upper chamber. Which Dr. Lightfoot thinks was probably the publick meeting-room for the believers of that town; and they laid the body there, that Peter, if he would come, might raise her to life the more solemnly in that place.

Secondly, The request which her Christian friends sent to Peter to come to them with all speed, not to attend the funeral, but, if it might, be to prevent it, *ver. 38.* Lydda, where Peter now was, was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples at Joppa had heard that Peter was there, and that he had raised Eneas from a bed of languishing, and therefore *sent to him two men* to make the message the more solemn and respectful, *desiring him that he would not delay to come to them,* not telling him the occasion, lest he should modestly decline coming upon so great an errand, as to raise the dead; if they can but get him to them, they will leave it to him. Their friend was dead, and it was too late to send for a physician, but not too late to send for Peter. *Post mortem medicus,* is an absurdity, but not *post mortem apostolus.*

Thirdly, The posture in which he found the surviving, when he came to them, *ver. 40.* *Peter arose and went with them,* *ver. 39.* Though they did not tell him what they wanted him for, yet he was willing to go along with them, believing it was upon some good account or other that he was sent for. Let not faithful ministers grudge to be at every body's beck, as far as they have ability, when the great apostle *made himself the servant of all,* 1 Cor. ix. 19. He found the corpse laid in the upper-chamber, and attended by widows; properly, such as were in the communion of the church, poor widows; there they were,

1. Commending the deceased; a good work, when there was that in them which was truly commendable, and recommendable to imitation, and it is done modestly and soberly, and without flattery of the survivors, or any sinister intention, but purely for the glory of God, and the exciting of others to that which is virtuous and praise-worthy. The commendation of Tabitha, was like her own virtues, not in word, but in deed: Here were no encomiums of her in orations, or poems inscribed to her memory; but *the widows shewed the coats and garments which she made* for them, and bestowed upon them, *while she was with them.* It was the comfort of Job, while he lived, that *the loins of the poor blessed him,* because they were *warmed with the fleece of his sheep,* Job xxxi. 20. And here it was the credit of Tabitha when she was dead, that the backs of the widows pained her, for the garments which she made them. And those are certainly *best praised, whose own works praise them in the gates,* whether others words do or no. And it is much more honourable to clothe a company of crazy widows with needful clothing, for night and day, who will pray for their benefactors when they do not see them, than to clothe a company of lazy footmen with rich liveries, who perhaps, behind their backs will curse them that clothe them, *Eccles. vii. 21.* and it is what all that are wise and good will take a greater pleasure in; for goodness is true greatness, and will pass better in the account shortly. Observe, 1. In-

to what chanel Tabitha turned much of her charity, doubtless there were other instances of her alms-deeds which she did, but this was now produced ; she did, as it should seem (with her own hands) *make coats and garments* for poor widows, who, perhaps, with their own labour could make a shift to get their bread, but could not earn enough to buy clothes. And this is an excellent piece of charity, *if thou see'st the naked, that thou cover him*, Isa. lviii. 7. and not think it enough to say, *Be ye warmed*, Jam. ii. 15, 16. 2. What a greatful sense the poor had of her kindness ; *they shewed the coats*, not ashamed to own that they were indebted to her for the clothes on their backs. Those are horribly ungrateful indeed that have *kindness shewn* them, and will not make at least an acknowledgment of it, by *shewing the kindness* that is done them, as these widows here did. They that received alms are not obliged so industriously to conceal it, as those are who give alms. When the poor reflect upon the rich as uncharitable, and unmerciful, they ought to reflect upon themselves, and consider whether they are not unthankful and ungrateful. Their shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, tended to the praise not only of her *charity*, but of her *industry*, according to the character of the virtuous woman, that she *layeth her hands to the spindle*, or at least to the *needle*, and then *stretcheth out her hand to the poor*, and *reacheth forth her hands to the needy*, of what she has worked ; and when God and the poor have thus had their due, *she makes herself coverings of tapestry*, and her own clothing is *silk and purple*, Prov. xxxi. 19, 20, 21, 22.

2. They were here lamenting the loss of her ; the widows stood by Peter weeping. When the merciful are taken away, it should be laid to heart, especially by those to whom they have been in a particular manner merciful. They needed not weep for her, she was taken from the evil to come ; she rests from her labours, and her works follow her, besides those she leaves behind her ; but they weep for themselves and for their children, who will soon find the want of such a good woman, that had not left her fellow. Observe, They take notice of what good Dorcas did while she was with them ; but now she is gone from them, and that is the grief. Those that are charitable will find that the poor they have always with them, but it is well if those that are poor find that the charitable they have always with them. We must make a good use of the lights that yet a little while are with us, because they will not be always with us, will not be long with us. And when they are gone, we shall think what they did, when they were with us. It should seem the widows wept before Peter as an inducement to him, if he could do any thing, to have compassion on them, and help them, and restore one to them that used to have compassion on them. When charitable people are dead, there is no praying them to life again ; but when they are sick, that piece of gratitude is owing them to pray for their recovery, that if it be the will of God, those may be spared to live, who can ill be spared to die.

Fourthly, The manner how she was raised to life.

1. Privately, she was laid in the upper-room, where they used to have their publick meetings, and, it should seem, there was great crouding about the dead body, in expectation what would be done ; but Peter put them all forth, all the weeping widows, all but some few relations of the family, or, perhaps, the heads of the church, to join with him in prayer ; as Christ did, *Mat. ix. 25*. Thus Peter declined every thing that looked like vainglory and ostentation ; they came to see, but he did not come to be seen. He put them all forth, that he might with the more freedom pour out his soul before God in prayer upon this occasion, and not be disturbed with their noisy and clamorous lamentations.

2. By prayer ; in his healing Eneas, there was an implicit prayer, but in this greater work, he addressed himself to God by solemn prayer, as Christ when he raised Lazarus ; but Christ's prayer was with the authority of a son, who quickens whom he will : Peter's with the submission of a servant, who is under direction, and therefore he kneeled down and prayed.

3. By the word, a quickening word, a word which is spirit and life ; he turned to the body, which intimates, that when he prayed he turned from it : Lest the sight of it should discourage his faith, he looked another way, to teach us, like Abraham, *against hope, to believe in hope*, and overlook the difficulties that lie in the way, *not considering the body as now dead*, lest we should stagger at the promise, *Rom. iv. 19, 20*. But when he had prayed, he turned to the body, and spake in his Master's name, and according to his example, *Tabitha, arise* ; return to life again. Power went along with this word, and she came to life ; opened her eyes which death had closed. Thus in the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, the first sign of life, is the opening of the eyes of the mind, *Acts xxvi. 18*. When she saw Peter, she sat up, to shew that she was really and truly alive. And, *ver. 41*. He gave her his hand, and lift her up ; not as if she laboured under any remaining weakness ; but thus he would as it were welcome her to life again, and give her the right hand of fellowship among the living, from whom she had been cut off. And, lastly, he called the saints and widows, who were all in sorrow for her death, and presented her alive to them, to their great comfort ; particularly of the widows, who laid her death much to heart, *ver. 41*. to them he presented her, as Elijah, *1 Kings xvii. 22*. and Elisha, *2 Kings iv. 36*. and Christ, *Luke vii. 15*. presented the dead sons alive to their mothers. And the greatest joy and satisfaction is expressed by *life from the dead*.

Fifthly, The good effect of this miracle.

1. Many were by it convinced of the truth of the gospel, that it was from heaven, and not of men, and believed in the Lord, *ver. 42*. The thing was known throughout all Joppa ; it would be in every body's mouth quickly, and it being a town of seafaring men, the notice of it would be the sooner carried from thence to other countries ; and though some never minded it, many were wrought upon by it. This was the end of miracles, to confirm a divine revelation.

2. Peter was hereby induced to continue some time in this city, *ver. 43*. Finding that a door of opportunity was opened for him there, he tarried there many days, till he was sent thence, and sent for from thence upon business to another place. He tarried not in the house of Tabitha, though she was rich, lest he should seem to seek his own glory ; but he took up his lodging with one Simon a tanner, an ordinary tradesman, which is an instance of condescension and humility. And hereby he has taught us, not to mind high things, but to condescend to them of low estate, *Rom. xiii. 16*. And though Peter might seem to be buried in obscurity here in the house of a poor tanner by the sea-side ; yet hence God fetched him to a noble piece of service, in the next chapter ; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted.

C H A P. X.

It is a turn very new and remarkable, which the story of this chapter gives to the Acts of the apostles ; hitherto both at Jerusalem and every where else where the ministers of Christ came, they preached the gospel only to the Jews, or those Greeks that were circumcised and proselyted to the Jews religion ; but now, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles ; and to them the door of faith is here opened : Good news indeed to us sinners of the Gentiles. The apostle Peter is the man that is first employed to admit uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian church ; and Cornelius, a Roman centurion, or colonel, is the first that with his family and friends are so admitted. Now here we are told, (1.) How Cornelius was directed by a vision to send for Peter, and did send for him accordingly, *ver. 1,—8*. (2.) How Peter was directed by a vision to go to Cornelius, though he was a Gentile, without making any scruple of it ; and did go accordingly, *ver. 9,—23*. (3.) The happy interview between Peter and Cornelius at Cesarea, *ver. 24,—33*. (4.) The sermon Peter preached in the house of Cornelius to him and to his friends, *ver. 34,—43*. (5.) The baptizing of Cornelius and his friends with the holy Ghost first, and then with water, *ver. 44,—48*.

1. **T**HERE was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2. A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3. He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord ? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter : 6. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side : he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7. And when the angel, which spake unto Cornelius, was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually : 8. And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

The bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the bringing of them who had been strangers and foreigners to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, was such a mystery to the apostles themselves, and such a surprize, *Eph. iii. 3, 6*. that it concerns us carefully to observe all the circumstances of the beginning of this great work, this part of the mystery of godliness, *Christ preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world*, *1 Tim. iii. 16*. It is not unlikely, that some Gentiles might before now step into a synagogue of the Jews, and hear the gospel preached, but the gospel was never yet designedly preached to the Gentiles, nor any of them baptized ; Cornelius was the first. And here we have,

First, An account given us of this Cornelius, who and what he was that was the first-born of the Gentiles to Christ ; We are here told, that he was a great man, and a good man ; two characters that seldom meet, but here they did ; and where they do meet they put a luster upon each other ; goodness makes greatness truly valuable, and greatness makes goodness much more serviceable.

1. Cornelius was an officer of the army, *ver. 1*. He was at present quartered in Cesarea, a strong city, lately re-edified and fortified by Herod the great, and called Cesarea in honour of Augustus Cesar.

Cesar. It lay upon the sea-shore, very convenient for the keeping up of a correspondence between Rome and its conquests in those parts. The Roman governor or proconsul, ordinarily resided here, *Acts* xxiii. 23, 24. xxiv. 6. Here there was a band, or cohort, or regiment of the Roman army, which probably was the governor's life-guard, and is here called the Italian band, because that they might be the more sure of their fidelity, they were all native Romans or Italians; Cornelius had a command in this part of the army. His name Cornelius, was much used among the Romans, among some of the most ancient and noble families. He was an officer of considerable rank and figure, a centurion. We read of one in our Saviour's time of that rank whom he gave a great commendation of, *Mat.* viii. 10. When a Gentile must be pitched upon to receive the gospel first, it is not a Gentile philosopher, much less a Gentile priest, who are bigotted to their notions and worships, and prejudiced against the gospel of Christ; but a Gentile soldier, who is a man of more free thought; and he that truly is so, when the Christian doctrine is fairly set before him, cannot but receive it, and bid it welcome. Fishermen, unlearned and ignorant men, were the first of the Jewish converts, but not so of the Gentiles; for the world shall know that the gospel has that in it which may recommend it to men of polite learning and a liberal education, as we have reason to think this Centurion was. Let not soldiers and officers of the army plead that their employment frees them from the restraints which some others are under, and giving them an opportunity of living more at large, may excuse them if they be not religious; for here was an officer of the army that embraced Christianity, and yet was neither turned out of his place, nor turned himself out. And, lastly, it was a mortification to the Jews, that not only the Gentiles were taken into the church, but the first that was taken in, was an officer of the Roman army, which was to them the *abomination of desolation*.

2. He was, according to the measure of the light he had, a religious man; it is a very good character that is given of him, *ver.* 2. He was no idolater, no worshipper of false gods, or images, nor allowed himself in any of those immoralities which the greater part of the Gentile world were given up to, to punish them for their idolatry. 1. He was possessed with a principle of regard to the true and living God; he was *a devout man, and one that feared God*; he believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and had a reverence of his glory and authority, and a dread of offending him by sin; and though he was a soldier, it was no diminution to the credit of his valour to tremble before God. 2. He kept up religion in his family; he *feared God with all his house*. He would not admit any idolaters under his roof; but took care that not himself only, but all his, should serve the Lord. Every good man will do what he can that those about him may be good too. 3. He was a very charitable man; he *gave much alms to the people*; the people of the Jews, notwithstanding the singularities of their religion. Though he was a Gentile, he was willing to contribute to the relief of one that was a real object of charity, without asking what religion he was of. 4. He was much in prayer; he *prayed to God always*. He kept up stated times for prayer, and was constant to them. Note, Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, and neither will excuse us from the other.

Secondly, The orders given him from heaven by the ministry of an angel, to send for Peter to come to him; which he would never have done, if he had not been thus directed to do it. Observe,

1. How, and in what way, these orders were given him; he had a vision, in which an angel delivered them to him. It was about the *ninth hour of the day*; at three of the clock in the afternoon, which is with us an hour of business and conversation; but then, because it was in the temple, the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, it was made by devout people, an *hour of prayer*, to intimate, that all our prayers are to be offered up in the virtue of the great sacrifice. Cornelius was now at prayer, so he tells us himself, *ver.* 30. Now here we are told, 1. That an angel of God came in to him. By the brightness of his countenance, and the manner of his coming in, he knew him to be something more than man, and therefore nothing less than an angel, an express from heaven. 2. That he *saw him evidently*, with his bodily eyes, not in a dream presented to his imagination, but in a vision, presented to his sight, for his greater satisfaction, it carried its own evidence along with it. 3. That he called him by his name, Cornelius, to intimate the particular notice God took of him. 4. That this put Cornelius for the present into some confusion, *ver.* 4. *When he looked on him, he was afraid*; the wisest and best men have been struck with fear upon the appearance of any extraordinary messenger from heaven; and justly, for sinful man knows he has no reason to expect any good tidings from thence. And therefore Cornelius cries, *What is it, Lord? What is the matter?* This he speaks as one afraid of something amiss, and longing to be eased of that fear, by knowing the truth: Or, as one desirous to know the mind of God, and ready to comply with it, as Joshua, *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* And Samuel, *speak, for thy servant heareth*.

2. What the message was, that was delivered him.

1. He is assured, that God accepts of him in walking according to the light he had, *ver.* 4. *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*. Observe, prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the *fast God hath chosen*, is to draw out the soul to the hungry, *Isa.* lviii. 6, 7. It is not enough to pray that what we have may be sanctified to us, but we must give alms of such things as we have; and then behold, *all things are clean to us*, *Luke* xi. 41. And we must follow our alms with our prayers that God would graciously accept them, and that they may be blessed to those to whom they are given. Cornelius prayed and gave alms, not as the Pharisees, *to be seen of men*, but in sincerity as unto God; and he is here told, that they were *come up for a memorial before God*; they were upon record in heaven, in the *book of remembrance* that is written there for all that fear God, and shall be remembered to his advantage; thy prayers shall be answered, and thine alms recompensed. The sacrifices under the law, are said to be for a memorial, *See Lev.* ii. 9, 16. v. 12. xvi. 15. And prayers and alms are our spiritual offerings, which God is pleased to take cognizance of, and have regard to. The divine revelation communicated to the Jews, as far as the Gentiles were concerned in it, not only as it directed and improved the light and law of nature, but as it promised a Messiah to come, Cornelius believed and submitted to; what he did, he did in that faith, and was accepted of God in it; for the Gentiles to whom the law of Moses came, were not obliged to become *circumcised Jews*, as those to whom the gospel of Christ comes, are to become *baptized Christians*.

2. He is appointed to enquire after a further discovery of divine grace, now lately made to the world, *ver.* 5, 6. He must send forthwith to Joppa, and enquire for one Simon Peter, he lodgeth at the house of one Simon a tanner; his house is by the sea-side, and if he be sent for, he will come; and when he comes, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do, in answer to thy question, *What is it Lord?* No where are two things very surprizing, and worthy our consideration,

1. Cornelius prays and gives alms, in the fear of God; is religious himself, and keeps up religion in his family; and all this so as to be accepted of God in it, and yet there is something further that he ought to do; he ought to embrace the Christian religion, now God has established it among men. Not, he may do it if he pleases, it will be an improvement and entertainment to him; but he must do it, it is indispensably necessary to his acceptance with God for the future, though he has been accepted in his services hitherto. He that believed the promise of the Messiah, must now believe the performance of that promise. Now God had given a further record concerning his Son, than what had been given in the Old Testament prophecies, he requires that we receive that when it is brought to us: And now neither our prayers nor our alms come up for a memorial before God unless we believe in Jesus Christ; for it is that further which we ought to do. This is his commandment, that we believe, prayers and alms are accepted from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more. But from those to whom it is preached, that *Jesus is Christ*, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers and alms, that they believe that, and rest upon him alone for acceptance.

2. Cornelius has now an angel from heaven talking to him, and yet he must not receive the gospel of Christ from this angel, nor be told by him what he ought to do, but all that the angel has to say, is, send for Peter, he and I shall tell thee. As the former observation puts a mighty honour upon the gospel, so doth this upon the gospel ministry; it was not to the highest of angels, but to them who were less than the least of all saints, that this grace was given to preach among the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, *Eph.* iii. 8. that the excellency of the power might be of God, and the dignity of an institution of Christ supported; for unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, *Heb.* ii. 5. but to the Son of man as the sovereign, and the sons of men as his agents and ministers of state, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us, as this angel's now was to Cornelius. And as it was an honour to the apostle that he must preach that which an angel might not, so it was a further honour that an angel was dispatched on purpose from heaven to order him to be sent for. To bring a faithful minister and a willing people together is a work worthy of an angel, and what therefore the greatest of men should be glad to be employed in.

Thirdly, His immediate obedience to these orders, *ver.* 7, 8. He sent with all speed to Joppa to fetch Peter to him. Had he himself only been concerned, he would have gone to Joppa to him. But he had a family, and kinsmen, and friends, *ver.* 24. a little congregation of them that could not go with him to Joppa, and therefore he sends for Peter. Observe,

1. When he sent; as soon as ever the angel which *spoke unto him* was departed. Without dispute or delay, he was obedient to the heavenly vision. He perceived by what the angel said, he was to have some further work prescribed him, and he longed to have it told him. He *would have*, and *desired* to do this commandment. In any affair wherein our souls are concerned, it is good for us not to lose time.

2. Whom he sent. *Two of his household servants*, who all feared God, and a *devout soldier*, one of them that waited on him continually. Observe, a *devout centurion had devout soldiers*; a little devotion commonly goes a great way with soldiers, but there would be more of it in the soldiers, if there were but more of it in the commanders. Officers in an army that have such a great power over the soldiers, as we find the centurion had, *Mat. viii. 9.* have a great opportunity of promoting religion, at least of restraining vice and profaneness in those under their command, if they would but improve it. Observe, when this centurion was to choose some of his soldiers to attend his person and to be always about him, he pitched upon such of them as were devout, they shall be preferred and countenanced, to encourage others to be so; he went by David's rule, *Psal. ci. 6. Mine eye shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me.*

3. What instructions he gave them, *ver. 8. he declared all these things unto them*, told them of the vision he had, and the orders given him to send for Peter, because Peter's coming was a thing in which they were concerned, for they had souls to save as well as he. Therefore he doth not only tell them where to find Peter, which he might have thought it enough to do, the *servant knows not what his lord doth*; but he tells them on what errand he was to come, that they might importune him.

9. ¶ On the morrow as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour. 10. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11. And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12. Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14. But Peter said, Not, so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15. And the voice spake unto him again the second time. What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen, should mean; behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius, had made enquiry for Simons house, and stood before the gate, 18. And called, and asked whether Simon which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

Cornelius had received positive orders from heaven to send for Peter, whom otherwise he had not heard of, or at least not heeded; but here is another difficulty that lies in the way of bringing them together, the question is, whether Peter will come to Cornelius when he is sent for, not as if he thinks it below him to come at a beck, or as if he is afraid to preach his doctrine to a polite man as Cornelius was; but it sticks at a point of conscience; Cornelius is a very worthy man, and has many good qualities, but he is a Gentile, he is not circumcised: And because God in his law had forbidden his people to associate with idolatrous nations, they would not keep company with any but those of their own religion, though they were never so deserving; and carried the matter so far, that they made even the involuntary touch of a Gentile to contract a ceremonial pollution, *John xviii. 28.* Peter had not got over this stingy, bigotted notion of his countrymen, and therefore will be shy of coming to Cornelius. Now to remove this difficulty he has a vision here, to prepare him to receive the message sent him by Cornelius, as Ananias had to prepare him to go to Paul. The scriptures of the Old Testament had spoken plainly of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the church, Christ had given plain intimations of it, when he ordered them to *teach all nations*, and yet even Peter himself that knew so much of his Master's mind cannot understand it, till it was here revealed by vision, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, *Eph. iii. 6.* Now here observe,

First, The circumstances of this vision.

1. It was when the messengers sent from Cornelius were now nigh the city, *ver. 9.* Peter knew nothing of their approach, and they knew nothing of his praying, but he that knew both him and them was preparing things for the interview, and facilitating the end of their negotiation. To all God's purposes *there is a time*, a proper time. And he is pleased often to bring things to the minds of his ministers which they had not thought of, just then when they have occasion to use them.

2. It was when Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about noon.

1. Peter was much in prayer, much in secret prayer, though he had a great deal of publick work upon his hands. 2. He prayed about the sixth hour, according to David's example, who not only morning and evening, but at noon, addressed himself to God by prayer, *Psal. lv. 17.* From morning to night we would think to be too long to be without meat, yet who thinks it is too long to be

without prayer. 3. He prayed upon the house-top; thither he retired for privacy, where he could neither hear nor be heard, and so might avoid both distraction and ostentation. There upon the roof of the house he had a full view of the heavens, which might assist his pious adoration of the God he prayed to, and there he had also a full view of the city and country, which might assist his pious compassion of the people he prayed for. 4. He had this vision immediately after he had prayed, as an answer to his prayer for the spreading of the gospel; and because the ascent of the heart to God in prayer is an excellent preparative to receive the discoveries of the divine grace and favour.

3. It was when he became very hungry, and was waiting for his dinner, *ver. 10.* probably he had not eaten before, that day, though doubtless he had prayed before; and now he would have eaten, *ἤθελε γεῦσασθαι*, he would have tasted, which intimates his great moderation and temperance in eating; when he was very hungry, yet he would be content with a little, with a taste, and would not fly upon the spoil. Now this hunger was a proper inlet to the vision about meats, as Christ's hunger in the wilderness was to Satan's temptations to turn stones into bread.

Secondly, The vision itself, which was not so plain as that to Cornelius, but more figurative and enigmatical, to make the deeper impression.

1. He fell into a trance, or ecstasy, not of terror, but of contemplation, with which he was so intirely swallowed up as not only not to be regardful, but not to be sensible of external things; he quite lost himself to this world, and so had his mind intirely free for converse with divine things, as Adam in innocency, when the deep sleep fell upon him. The more clear we get of the world, the more near we get to heaven, whether Peter was now in the body or out of the body, he could not himself tell, much less can we, *2 Cor. xii. 2, 3.* see *Gen. xv. 12.* *Acts xxii. 17.*

2. He saw heaven opened; that he might be sure his authority to go to Cornelius was indeed from heaven; that it was a divine light which altered his sentiments, and a divine power that gave him his commission. The opening of the heavens signified the opening of a mystery that had been hid, *Rom. xvi. 20.*

3. He saw a great sheet full of all manner of living creatures, which descended from heaven, and was let down to him, to the earth, i. e. to the roof of the house where he now was. Here were not only beasts of the earth, but fowls of the air, which might have flown away, laid at his feet; and not only tame beasts, but wild. Here were no fishes of the sea, because there were none of them in particular unclean, but whatever had fins and scales were allowed to be eaten. Some make this sheet thus filled to represent the church of Christ. It comes down from heaven, from heaven opened, not only to send it down, *Rev. xxi. 2.* but to receive souls sent up from it; it is knit at the four corners, to receive those from all parts of the world that are willing to be added to it; and to retain and keep those safe that are taken in to it, that they may not fall out; and in this we find some of all countries, nations and languages, without any distinction of Greek or Jew, or any disadvantage put upon Barbarian, or Scythian, *Col. iii. 2.* The net of the gospel incloseth all, both bad and good, those that before were clean, and unclean. Or it may be applied to the bounty of the divine providence, which antecedently to the prohibitions of the ceremonial law had given to man a liberty to use all the creatures, to which by the cancelling of that law we are now restored. By this vision we are taught to see all the benefit and service we have from the inferior creatures coming down to us from heaven, it is the gift of God who made them, made them fit for us, and then gave to man a right to them, and dominion over them. Lord, what is man that he should be thus magnified! *Psal. viii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.* How would it double our comfort in the creatures, and our obligations to serve God in the use of them, to see them thus let down to us out of heaven.

4. Peter was ordered by a voice from heaven to make use of this plenty and variety which God had sent him, *ver. 13. Rise, Peter, kill and eat*, without putting any difference between clean and unclean, take which thou hast most mind to. The distinction of meats which the law made was intended to put a difference between Jew and Gentile, that it might be difficult to them to dine and sup with a Gentile, because they would have that set before them which they were not allowed to eat; and now the taking off of that prohibition was a plain allowance to converse with the Gentiles, and to be free and familiar with them, now they might fare as they fared, and therefore might eat with them, and be fellow-commoners with them.

5. Peter stuck to his principles, and would by no means hearken to the motion, though he was hungry, *ver. 14. Not so, Lord.* Though hunger will break through stone walls, God's laws, should be to us a stronger fence than stone walls, and not so easily broken through. And he will adhere to God's laws, though he had a countermand by a voice from heaven, not knowing at first but that kill and eat was a command of trial whether he would adhere to the more sure word, the written law, and if so his answer had been very good, *Not so, Lord*; temptations to eat forbidden fruit must not be parleyed with, but peremptorily rejected; we must startle at the thought of it, *Not so, Lord.* The reason he gives is, *For I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean*; hitherto I have kept

my integrity in this matter, and will still keep it. If God, by his grace, has preserved us from gross sin unto this day, we should use that as an argument with ourselves to abstain *from all appearance of evil*. So strict were the pious Jews in this matter, that the seven brethren, those glorious martyrs under Antiochus, chose rather to be tortured to death in the most cruel manner that ever was, than to eat swine's flesh, because it was forbidden by the law. No wonder then that *Peter* faith it with so much pleasure, that his conscience could witness for him, that he had never gratified his appetite with any forbidden food.

6. God, by a second voice from heaven, proclaimed the repeal of the law in this case, *ver. 15. What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*. He that made the law, might alter it when he pleased, and reduce the matter to its first state: God had, for reasons suited to the Old Testament dispensation, restrained the Jews from eating such and such meats, which, while that dispensation lasted, they were obliged in conscience to submit to; but he has now, for reasons suited to the New Testament dispensation, taken off that restraint, and set the matter at large, has *cleansed* that which was before polluted to us, and we ought to make use of, and *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*, and not call that common, or unclean, which God has now declared clean. Note, We ought to welcome it as a great mercy, that, by the gospel of Christ, we are freed from the distinction of meats, which was made by the law of Moses, and that now *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused*; not so much because hereby we gain the use of swine's flesh, hares, rabbits, and other pleasant and wholesome food for our bodies, but chiefly because conscience is hereby freed from a yoke in things of this nature, *that we might serve God without fear*. Though the gospel has made duties which were not so by the law of nature, yet it has not, like the law of Moses, made sins that were not so. Those who command to abstain from some kinds of meat, at some times of the year, and place religion in it, call that common which God hath cleansed, and, in that error, more than in any truth, are the successors of *Peter*.

7. *This was done thrice*, *ver. 16*. The sheet was drawn up a little way, and let down again the second time, and so the third time, with the same call to him, to kill and eat, and the same reason, that *what God hath cleansed, we must not call common*; but whether *Peter's* refusal was repeated the second and third time is not certain; sure it was not, when his objection had the first time received such a satisfactory answer. The doubling of Pharaoh's dream, and so the trebling of *Peter's* vision, was to shew that the thing was certain, and engage him to take so much the more notice of it. The instructions given us in the things of God, whether by the ear in the preaching of the word, or by the eye in sacraments, need to be oft repeated; *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line*: But at last the vessel was received up into heaven. Those who make this vessel to represent the church, including both Jews and Gentiles, as this did both clean and unclean creatures, make this very aptly to signify the admission of the believing Gentiles into the church, and into heaven too, into the *Jerusalem above*; Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and there we shall find, besides those that are sealed out of all the tribes of Israel, an innumerable company out of every nation, *Rev. vii. 9*. but they are such as God has cleansed.

Thirdly, The providence which very opportunely explained this vision, and gave *Peter* to understand the intention of it, *ver. 17, 18*.

1. What Christ did, *Peter* knew not just then (*John xiii. 7*.) he doubted within himself what this vision which he had seen should mean; he had no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was a heavenly vision, all his doubt was concerning the meaning of it. Note, Christ reveals himself to his people by degrees, and not all at once; and leaves them to doubt a while, to ruminate upon a thing, and debate it to and fro in their own minds, before he clears it up to them.

2. Yet he was made to know presently, for the men which were sent from *Cornelius*, were just now come to the house, and were at the gate enquiring whether *Peter* lodged there, and, by their errand, it will appear what was the meaning of this vision. Note, God knows what services are before us, and therefore how to prepare us; and we then better know the meaning of what he has taught us, when we find what occasion we have to make use of it.

19. ¶ While *Peter* thought on the vision, the spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21. Then *Peter* went down to the men which were sent unto him from *Cornelius*; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22. And they said, *Cornelius* the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the

morrow *Peter* went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24. And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea: and *Cornelius* waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25. And as *Peter* was coming in, *Cornelius* met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26. But *Peter* took him up, saying, Stand up; I my self also am a man. 27. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation: but God hath shewed me, that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29. Therefore came I unto you without gain saying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me. 30. And *Cornelius* said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31. And said, *Cornelius*, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither *Simon* whose surname is *Peter*; he is lodged in the house of one *Simon* a tanner, by the sea-side; who when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

We have here the meeting between *Peter* the apostle, and *Cornelius* the centurion: Though Paul was designed to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and to gather in the harvest among them, and *Peter* to be the apostle of the circumcision, yet it is ordered that *Peter* shall break the ice, and reap the first-fruits of the Gentiles, that the believing Jews, who retained too much of the old leaven of ill will to the Gentiles, might be the better reconciled to their admission into the church, when they were first brought in by their own apostle, which *Peter* urgeth against those that would have imposed circumcision upon the Gentile converts, *Acts xv. 7*. Ye know that God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel. Now here,

First, *Peter* is directed by the Spirit to go along with *Cornelius's* messengers, *ver. 19, 20*. and this is the exposition of the vision; now the riddle is unriddled: While *Peter* thought on the vision: He was musing upon it, and then it was opened to him. Note, Those that would be taught the things of God, must think on those things; that would understand the scriptures, must meditate in them day and night. He was at a loss about it, and then had it explained; which encourages us, when we know not what to do, to have our eyes up unto God for direction. Observe,

1. Whence he had the direction: The Spirit said to him what he should do. It was not spoken to him by an angel, but spoken in him by the Spirit secretly whispering it in his ear, as it were, as God spoke to Samuel, *1 Sam. ix. 15*. or impressing it powerfully upon his mind, so that he knew it to be a divine afflatus, or inspiration, according to the promise, *John xvi. 13*.

2. What the direction was: (1.) He is told, before any of the servants could come up to tell him, that there are three men below want to speak with him, *ver. 19*. and he must arise from his musings, leave off thinking of the vision, and go down to them, *ver. 20*. Those that are searching into the meaning of the words of God, and the visions of the Almighty, should not be always poring, no, nor always praying; but should sometimes look abroad, look about them, and they may meet with that which will be of use to them in their enquiries; for the scripture is in the fulfilling every day. (2.) He is ordered to go along with the messengers to *Cornelius*, though he was a Gentile, doubting nothing: He must not only go, but go cheerfully, without reluctance, or hesitation, or any scruple concerning the lawfulness of it; not doubting whether he might go, no, nor whether he ought to go; for it was his duty: Go with them, for I have sent them; and I will bear thee out in going along with them, however thou mayest be censured for it. Note, When we see our call clear to any service, we should not suffer ourselves to be perplexed with doubts and scruples concerning it, arising from former prejudices, or prepossessions, or a fear of mens censure. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and prove his own work.

Secondly, He receives both them and their message; he went down to them, *ver. 21*. So far was he from going out of the way, or refusing to be spoken with, as one that was shy of them, or making them tarry, as one that took state upon him, that he went to them himself, told them he was the person they were enquiring for! And,

1. He favourably receives their message, with abundance of openness and condescension he asks, what their business is, what they have to say to him, What is the cause wherefore ye are come? and they tell him their errand, *ver. 22*. *Cornelius*, an officer of the

the Roman army, a very honest gentleman, and one that has more religion than most of his neighbours, *that fears God above many* (Neh. vii. 2.) who, though he is not a Jew himself, has carried it so well, that he is of good report among all the people of the Jews, they will all give him a good word, for a conscientious, sober, charitable man, so that it will be no discredit to thee to be seen in his company, he was warned from God, *ἐγγυμνήσθην*, he had an oracle from God, sent him by an angel (and the lively oracles of the law of Moses were given by the disposition of angels) by which he was ordered to send for thee to his house (where he is expecting thee, and ready to bid thee welcome) and to hear words of thee: They know not what words, but they are such as he may hear from thee, and not from any one else so well: *Faith comes by hearing*. When Peter repeats this, he tells us more fully, they are words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved, chap. xi. 14. Come to him, for an angel bid him send for thee: Come to him, for he is ready to hear and receive those saving words thou hast to bring him.

2. He kindly entertained the messengers, ver. 23. He called them in, and lodged them. He did not bid them go and refresh, and repose themselves in an inn at their own charge, but was himself at the charge of entertaining them in his own quarters. What was a getting ready for him, ver. 10. they should be welcome to share in; he little thought what company he should have when he bespoke his dinner, but God foresaw it. Note, It becomes Christians and ministers to be hospitable, and ready, according as their ability is, and there is occasion for it, to entertain strangers. Peter lodged them, though they were Gentiles, to shew how readily he complied with the design of the vision in eating with Gentiles; for he immediately took them to eat with him. Though they were two of them servants, and the other a common soldier, yet Peter thought it not below him to take them into his house: Probably, he did it, that he might have some talk with them about Cornelius, and his family; for the apostles, though they had instructions from the Spirit, yet made use of other informations, as they had occasion for them.

Thirdly, He went with them to Cornelius, whom he found ready to receive and entertain him.

1. Peter, when he went with them, was accompanied by certain brethren from Joppa, where he now was, ver. 23. Six of them went along with him, as we find, chap. xi. 12. Either Peter desired their company, that they might be witnesses of his proceeding cautiously with reference to the Gentiles, and of the good ground on which he went, and therefore he voucheth them, chap. xi. 12. or they offered their service to attend him, and desired they might have the honour and happiness of being his fellow-travellers. This was one way in which the primitive Christians very much shewed their respect to their ministers, they accompanied them in their journeys, to keep them in countenance, to be their guard, and, as there was occasion, to minister to them; with a further prospect not only of doing them service, but of being edified by their converse. It is pity those who have skill and will to do good to others by their discourse, should want an opportunity for it by travelling alone.

2. Cornelius, when he was ready to receive him, had got some friends together of Cesarea: It seems, it was above a day's journey, near two, from Joppa to Cesarea; for it was the day after they set out that they entered into Cesarea, ver. 24. and the afternoon of that day, ver. 30. It is likely they travelled on foot, the apostles generally did so. Now when they came into the house of Cornelius, Peter found, (1.) That he was expected, and that was an encouragement to him: Cornelius waited for them, and such a guest was worth waiting for; nor can I blame him if he waited with some impatience, longing to know what that mighty thing was, which an angel bid him expect to hear from Peter. (2.) That he was expected by many, and that was a further encouragement to him. As Peter brought some with him to partake of the spiritual gift he had now to dispense, so Cornelius had called together, not only his own family, but his kinsmen, and near friends, to partake with him of the heavenly instructions he expected from Peter, which would give Peter a larger opportunity of doing good. Note, We should not covet to eat our spiritual morsels alone, Job xxxi. 17. It ought to be both given and taken as a piece of kindness and respect to our kindred and friends to invite them to join with us in religious exercises, to go with us to hear a good sermon. What Cornelius ought to do, he thought his kinsmen and friends ought to do too; and therefore let them come hear it at the first hand, that it may be no surprize to them to see him change upon it.

Fourthly, Here is the first interview between Peter and Cornelius; in which we have,

1. The profound, and, indeed, undue respect and honour which Cornelius paid to Peter, ver. 25. He met him as he was coming in, and, instead of taking him in his arms, and embracing him as a friend, which would have been very acceptable to Peter, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him; some think, as a prince and a great man, according to the usage of the eastern countries; others think, as an incarnate deity, or, as if he took him to be the Messiah himself. His worshipping a man was indeed culpable, but, considering his present ignorance, it was excusable; nay, and it was an evidence of something in him that

was very commendable, and that was a great veneration for divine and heavenly things: No wonder if, till he was better informed, he took him to be the Messiah, and therefore worshipped him, whom he was ordered to send for by an angel from heaven: But the worshipping of his pretended successor, who is not only a man, but a sinful man, the man of sin himself, is altogether inexcusable, and such an absurdity, as would be incredible, if we were not told before, that all the world would worship the beast, Rev. xiii. 4.

2. Peter's modest, and, indeed, just and pious refusal of this honour that was done him, ver. 26. He took him up into his arms, with his own hands (though time was when he little thought he should ever either receive so much respect from, or shew so much affection to an uncircumcised Gentile) saying, Stand up, I myself also am a man, and therefore not to be worshipped thus. The good angels of the churches, are like the good angels of heaven, cannot bear to have the least of that honour shewn to them, which is due to God only: See thou do it not, saith the angel to John, Rev. xix. 10. xx. 9. and, in like manner, the apostle to Cornelius. How careful was Paul that no man should think of him above what he saw in him! 2 Cor. xii. 6. Christ's faithful servants could better bear to be vilified, than to be deified. Peter did not entertain a surmise that his great respect for him, though excessive, might contribute to the success of his preaching, and therefore, if he will be deceived, let him be deceived; no, let him know that Peter is a man, that the treasure is in earthen vessels, that he may value the treasure for its own sake.

Fifthly, The account which Peter and Cornelius give to each other, and to the company, of the hand of heaven in bringing them together. As he talked with him, *συνομιλῶν αὐτῷ*, he went in, ver. 27. Peter went in, talking familiarly with Cornelius, endeavouring, by the freedom of his converse with him, to take off something of that dread which he seemed to have of him; and when he came in, he found many that were come together, more than he expected; which added solemnity as well as opportunity of doing good to this service. Now,

1. Peter declares the direction God gave to him to come to those Gentiles, ver. 21, 29. They knew it had never been allowed by the Jews, but always looked upon as an unlawful thing, *ἀθέμιτον*, an abomination, for a man that is a Jew, a native Jew, as I am, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation, a stranger, an uncircumcised Gentile. It was not made so by the law of God, but by the decree of their wise men, which they looked upon to be no less obliging. They did not forbid them to converse or traffick with Gentiles in the street, or shop, or upon the exchange, but to eat with them. Even in Joseph's time, the Egyptians and Hebrews could not eat together, Gen. xliii. 32. The three children would not defile themselves with the king's meat, Dan. i. 8. They might not come into the house of a Gentile, for they looked upon it to be ceremonially polluted. Thus scornfully did the Jews look upon the Gentiles, who were not behind-hand with them in contempt, as appears by many passages in the Latin poets. But now, saith Peter, God hath shewed me, by a vision, that I should not call any man common or unclean, nor refuse to converse with any man for the sake of his country. Peter, that had taught his new converts to save themselves from the untoward generation of wicked men (chap. ii. 40.) is now himself taught to join himself with the towardly generation of devout Gentiles: Ceremonial characters were abolished, that more regard might be had to moral ones. Peter thought it necessary to let them know how he came to change his mind in this matter, and that it was by a divine revelation, lest he should be upbraided with it as having used lightness.

God having thus taken down the partition-wall,

(1.) He assures them of his readiness to do them all the good offices he could, that when he kept at a distance, it was not out of any personal disgust to them, but only because he wanted leave from heaven, which now he had received, he was at their service: Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for; ready to preach the same gospel to you, that I have preached to the Jews. The disciples of Christ could not but have some notion of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, but they imagined it must be only to those Gentiles that were first proselyted to the Jewish religion; which mistake Peter acknowledges was now rectified.

(2.) He enquires wherein he might be serviceable to them; I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me? What do you expect from me? or, what business have you with me? Note, Those that desire the help of God's ministers, ought to look well to it that they propose right ends to themselves in it, and do it with a good intent.

2. Cornelius declares the direction God gave to him to send for Peter, and that it was purely in obedience to those directions that he had sent for him. Then we are right in our aims in sending for, and attending on a gospel ministry, when we do it with a regard to the divine appointment instituting that ordinance, and requiring us to make use of it. Now,

(1.) Cornelius gives an account of the angel's appearing to him, and ordering him to send for Peter; not as glorying in it, but

as that which warranted his expectation of a message from heaven by *Peter*.

1. He tells how this vision found him employed, *ver. 30. Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, this hour of the day that it is now when Peter came, about the middle of the afternoon.* By this it appears, that religious fasting, in order to the greater seriousness and solemnity of praying, was used by devout people that were not Jews; *the king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, Jonah iii. 5.* Some give these words another sense, *From four days ago I have been fasting until this hour*; as if he had eaten no meat, or, at least, no meal, from that time to this. But it comes in as an introduction to the story of the vision; and therefore the former must be the meaning. *He was at the ninth hour praying in his house, not in the synagogue, but at home: I will that men pray, wherever they dwell.* His praying in his house intimates, that it was not a secret prayer in his closet, but in a more publick room of his house, with his family about him; and, perhaps, after prayer he retired, and had this vision. Observe, *At the ninth hour of the day*, three of the clock in the afternoon, most people were travelling or trading, working in the fields, visiting their friends, taking their pleasure, or taking a nap after dinner; yet then *Cornelius* was at his devotions; which shews how much he made religion his business; and then it was that he had this message from heaven. Those that would hear comfortably from God, must be much in speaking to him.

2. He describes the messenger that brought him this message from heaven; there *stood a man before me in bright clothing*; such as *Christ's* was when he was transfigured, and that of the two angels who appeared at *Christ's* resurrection, *Luke xxiv. 4.* and at his ascension, *Acts i. 10.* shewing their relation to the world of light.

3. He repeats the message that was sent him, *ver. 31, 32.* just as we had it, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* only here it is said, *Thy prayer is heard.* We are not told what his prayer was, but if this message was an answer to it, and it should seem it was, we may suppose, that, finding the deficiency of natural light, and that it left him at a loss how to obtain the pardon of his sin, and the favour of God, he prayed that God would make some further discoveries of himself to him, and of *the way of salvation*: Well, saith the angel, *send for Peter*, and he shall give thee such a discovery.

(2.) He declares his own and his friends readiness to receive the message he had to deliver, *ver. 33. Immediately therefore I sent to thee, as I was directed, and thou hast well done that thou hast come to us, though we are Gentiles.* Note, Faithful ministers *do well to come* to people that are willing and desirous to receive instruction from them; *to come* when they are sent for; it is as good a deed as they can do.

Well, *Peter* is come to do his part, but will they do theirs? Yes: Thou art here prepared to *speake*, and *we are here* prepared to *hear*, *1 Sam. iii. 9, 10.* Observe,

1. Their religious attendance upon the word: *We are all here present before God, we are here* in a religious manner, *are here* as worshippers; they thus compose themselves into a serious, awful frame of spirit; *therefore*, because thou art come to us by such a warrant, on such an errand, because we have such a price in our hand as we never had before, and, perhaps, may never have again, *we are ready now* at this time of worship, *here* in this place of worship, though it was in a private house: *We are present, μαρτυροῦντες, we are* at the business, and are ready to come at a call. If we would have God's special presence at an ordinance, we must be there with a special presence, an ordinance presence; here I am. *We are all present, all* that were invited; *we*, and all that belong to us; *we*, and *all that is within us*; the whole of the man must be present; not the body *here*, and the heart, with the fool's eyes, in the ends of the earth: But that which makes it indeed a religious attendance is, *we are present before God*: In holy ordinances *we present ourselves unto the Lord*, and *we must be as before him*, as those that see his eye upon us.

2. The intention of this attendance: *We are present to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*, and given thee in charge to be delivered to us. Observe, 1. *Peter* was there to preach *all things that were commanded him of God*; for as he had an ample commission to preach the gospel, so he had full instructions what to preach. 2. They were ready to *hear*, not whatever he pleased to say, but what he was *commanded of God* to say. The truths of *Christ* were not communicated to the apostles, to be published or stifled as they thought fit, but intrusted with them to be published to the world. *We are ready to hear all*, to come at the beginning of the service, and stay to the end; and be attentive all the while, else how can *we hear all*? *We are desirous to hear all* that thou art commissioned to preach, though it be never so displeasing to flesh and blood, and never so contrary to our former notions, or present secular interests. *We are ready to hear all*, and therefore let nothing be kept back that is profitable for us.

34. ¶ Then *Peter* opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35. But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36. The word

which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by *Jesus Christ* (he is Lord of all) 37. That word (*I say*) you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which *John* preached: 38. How God anointed *Jesus of Nazareth* with the holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. 39. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree: 40. Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly, 41. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses, chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. 43. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins.

We have here *Peter's* sermon, preached to *Cornelius*, and his friends; that is, an abstract or summary of it; for we have reason to think, *that he did with many other words testify and exhort* to this purpose. It is intimated, that he delivered himself with a great deal of solemnity and gravity, but with freedom and copiousness, in that phrase, *that he opened his mouth, and spoke*, *ver. 34. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you*, saith Paul, *2 Cor. vi. 11.* You shall find us communicative, if we but find you inquisitive. Hitherto the mouths of the apostles had been shut to the uncircumcised Gentiles, they had nothing to say to them; but now God gave unto them, as he did to *Ezekiel*, *the opening of the mouth*.

This excellent sermon of *Peter's*, is admirably suited to the circumstances of those to whom he preached it; for it was a new sermon.

First, Because they were Gentiles to whom he preached, he shews, that, notwithstanding that, they were interested in the gospel of *Christ* which he had to preach, and intitled to the benefit of it, upon an equal foot with the Jews. It was necessary this should be cleared, or else with what comfort could either he preach, or they hear? He therefore lays down this as an undoubted principle, *that God is no respecter of persons, doth not know favour in judgment*, as the Hebrew phrase is, which magistrates are forbidden to do, *Deut. i. 17. xvi. 19. Prov. xxi. 13.* and are blamed for doing, *Psalms lxxxii. 2.* And it is often said of God, *that he doth not respect persons*, *Deut. x. 17. 2 Chron. xix. 7. Job xxxiv. 19. Rom. ii. 11. Col. iii. 25. 1 Pet. i. 17.* He doth not give judgment in favour of a man, for the sake of any external advantage foreign to the merits of the cause; God never perverts judgment upon personal regards and considerations, nor countenanceth an ill man in an ill thing for the sake of his beauty or stature, his country, parentage, relations, wealth or honour in the world: God, as a benefactor, gives favours arbitrarily, and by sovereignty, *Deut. vii. 7, 8. ix. 5, 6. Matt. xx. 10.* but he doth not, as a judge, so give sentence; *but in every nation, and under every denomination, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him*, *ver. 35.*

The case is plainly thus:

1. God never did, nor ever will, justify and save a wicked Jew, that lived and died impenitent, though he was of the seed of *Abraham*, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and had all the honour and advantages that attended circumcision: He doth, and will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil; and of the Jew first; whose privileges and professions, instead of screening him from the judgment of God, will but aggravate his guilt and condemnation: See *Rom. ii. 3, 8, 9, 17.* Though God has favoured the Jews, above other nations, with the dignities of visible church membership, yet he will not therefore accept of any particular persons of that dignity, if they allow themselves in immoralities contradictory to their profession, and particularly in persecution, which was now, more than any other, *the national sin of the Jews*.

2. He never did, nor ever will, reject or refuse an honest Gentile, who, though he has not the privileges and advantages that the Jews have, yet, like *Cornelius*, fears God, and worships him; and works righteousness, i. e. is just and charitable towards all men, who lives up to the light he has, both in a sincere devotion, and in a regular conversation, whatever nation he is of, though never so far remote from kindred to the seed of *Abraham*, though never so despicable, nay, though in never so ill a name, that shall be no prejudice to him; God judgeth of men by their hearts, not by their country, or parentage; and wherever he finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God, *Psalms xviii. 25.* Observe, *Fearing God, and working righteousness*, must go together; for as righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, so religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness: Godliness and honesty must go together, and neither will excuse

for the want of the other: But where these are predominant, no doubt is to be made of *acceptance with God*: Not that any man, since the fall, can obtain the favour of God, otherwise than through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and by the grace of God in him; but those that *have not the knowledge of him*, and therefore cannot have an explicit regard to him, may yet receive grace from God, for his sake, *to fear God, and to work righteousness*; and wherever God gives grace to do so, as he did to *Cornelius*, he will, through Christ, *accept the work of his own hands*.

Now, (1.) This was always a truth, before *Peter perceived it*, that *God respecteth no man's person*; it was the fixed rule of judgment from the beginning, *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if not well, sin, and the punishment of it, lies at the door*, Gen. iv. 7. God will not ask in the great day what country men were of, but what they were, what they did, and how they stood affected towards him, and towards their neighbours; and if mens personal characters received neither advantage nor disadvantage from the great difference that was between Jew and Gentile, much less from any lesser difference of sentiments and practices that may happen to be among Christians themselves, as those *about meats and days*, Rom. xiv. It is certain, *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost*; and he that in these things serveth Christ, is *accepted of God*, and ought to be *approved of men*; for dare we reject those whom God doth not?

(2.) Yet now it was made more clear than it had been; this great truth had been darkened by the covenant of peculiarity made with Israel, and the badges of distinction put upon them; the ceremonial law was a *wall of partition* between them and other nations; in it it was true, that *God favoured that nation*, Rom. iii. 1, 2. ix. 4. and from thence particular persons among them were ready to infer, that they were sure of *God's acceptance*, though they lived as they list; and that no Gentile could possibly be *accepted of God*: God had said a great deal by the prophets to prevent and rectify this mistake, but now at length he doth it effectually, by abolishing the covenant of peculiarity, and repealing the ceremonial law, and so setting the matter at large, and both Jew and Gentile upon the same level before God; and *Peter* is here made to *perceive it*, comparing the vision which he had, with that which *Cornelius* had. Now in *Christ Jesus*, it is plain, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*, Gal. v. 6. Col. iii. 11.

Secondly, Because they were Gentiles inhabiting a place within the confines of *the land of Israel*, he refers them to what they themselves could not but know concerning the life and doctrine, the preaching and miracles, the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus; for these were things, the report of which spread into every corner of the nation, *ver. 36, &c.* It facilitates the work of ministers, when they deal with such as have some knowledge of *the things of God*, to which they may appeal, and on which they may build.

(1.) They knew in general *the word*, that is, the gospel, *which God sent to the children of Israel*: That word, *I say, ye know*, *ver. 37.* Though the Gentiles were not admitted to hear it, Christ, and his disciples, were *not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, yet they could not but hear of it, it was all the talk both of city and country. We are often told in the gospels, *how the fame of Christ went into all parts of Canaan*, when he was on earth, as afterwards *the fame of his gospel went into all parts of the world*, Rom. x. 18. That word, that divine word, that word of power and grace, *ye know*: 1. What the purport of this word was; God, by it, *published the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ*, so it should be read; *εὐαγγέλιον εἰρήνης*: It is God himself that proclaims *peace*, who justly might have proclaimed war; he lets the world of mankind know, that he is willing to be at *peace* with them through *Jesus Christ*; in him he was *reconciling the world to himself*. 2. To whom it was sent; *to the children of Israel*, in the first place, the prime offer is made to them; this all their neighbours heard of, and were ready to envy them those advantages of the gospel, more than they ever envied them those of their law: *Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them*, Psalm cxxvi. 3.

(2.) They knew the several matters of fact relating to this word of the gospel sent to Israel.

1. They knew *the baptism of repentance which John preached* by way of introduction to it, and in which the gospel first began, *Mark i. 1.* They knew what an extraordinary man John was, and what a direct tendency his preaching had to *prepare the way of the Lord*: They knew what great flocking there was to his baptism, what an interest he had, and what he did.

2. They knew that immediately after *John's baptism*, the gospel of Christ, that word of *peace*, was *published throughout all Judea*, and that it took rise from Galilee. The twelve apostles, and seventy disciples, and our Master himself, published these glad tidings in all parts of the land; so that we may suppose there was not a town or village in all *the land of Canaan*, but had had the gospel preached in it.

3. They knew that *Jesus of Nazareth*, when he was here upon earth, *went about doing good*: They knew what a benefactor he was to that nation, both to the souls and bodies of men; how he

made it his business *to do good* to all, and never did hurt to any: He was not idle, but still doing; not selfish, but *doing good*; did not confine himself to one place, nor wait till people came to him to seek his help, but he *went to them, went about* from place to place, and wherever he came he was *doing good*: Hereby he shewed that he was *sent of God*, who is good, and doth good, and therefore doth good, because he is good: And who hereby left not himself without witness, to the world, in that he did good, Acts. xiv. 17. And in this he *bath set us an example* of indefatigable industry in serving God, and our generation; for *therefore we came into the world*, that we may do all the good we can in it; and therein, like Christ, we must always abide and abound.

4. They knew more particularly that he *healed all that were oppressed of the devil*, and helped them from under his oppressing power, by this it appeared not only that he was *sent of God*, as it was a kindness to men; but that he was sent to *destroy the works of the devil*; for thus he obtained many a victory over him.

5. They knew that the Jews put him to death; they *slew him by hanging him on a tree*. When Peter preached to the Jews, he said, *whom ye slew*; but now he preached to the Gentiles, it is whom they slew; they to whom he had done, and designed so much good.

All this they knew; but lest they should think it was only a report, and was magnified, as reports use to be, more than the truth; Peter for himself and the rest of the apostles attests it, *ver. 39.* *We are witnesses, eye-witnesses of all things which he did*; and ear-witnesses of the doctrine which he preached, *both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, in city and country*.

3. They did know, or might know by all this, that he had a commission from heaven to preach and act as he did. This he still harps upon in his discourse, and takes all occasions to hint it to them. Let them know,

1. That this Jesus is the Lord of all; it comes in a parenthesis, but is the principal proposition intended to be proved, that Jesus Christ by whom peace is made between God and man, *he is Lord of all*; not only as *God over all blessed for evermore*, but as mediator, *all power both in heaven and in earth* is put into his hand, and all judgment committed to him. He is Lord of angels, they are all his humble servants: He is Lord of the powers of darkness, for he hath triumphed over them. He is *King of nations*, has a power over all flesh; he is *King of saints*, all the children of God are his scholars, his subjects, his soldiers.

2. That *God anointed him with the holy Ghost and with power*; he was both authorized and enabled to do what he did by a divine anointing; from whence he was called Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. The *holy Ghost descended upon him* at his baptism, and he was *full of power* both in preaching and working miracles, which was the seal of a divine mission.

3. That *God was with him*, *ver. 38.* His works were wrought in God; God not only sent him, but was present with him all along, owned him, stood by him, and carried him on in all his services and sufferings. Note, Those whom God anoints he will accompany; will himself be with those to whom he has given his Spirit.

Thirdly, Because they had heard no more for certain concerning this Jesus, Peter declares to them his *resurrection from the dead*, and the proofs of it, that they might not think when he was slain there was an end of him.

Probably they had heard at Cæsarea some talk of his being *risen from the dead*; but the talk of it was soon silenced by that vile suggestion of the Jews, that *his disciples came by night, and stole him away*. And therefore Peter insists upon this as the main support of that word which *preacheth peace by Jesus Christ*.

1. The power by which he rose is uncontestably divine, *ver. 40.* *Him God raised up the third day*; which not only disproved all the calumnies and accusations he was laid under by men; but effectually proved God's acceptance of the satisfaction he made for the sin of man by the blood of his cross. He did not break prison, but had a legal discharge: *God raised him up*.

2. The proofs of his resurrection were uncontestably clear; for God *shewed him openly*. He gave him to be made manifest, *ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν ἐμφανῶς γενέσθαι*, to be visible, evidently so; so he appears, as that it appears beyond contradiction to be he, and not another. It was such a shewing of him, as amounted to a demonstration of the truth of his resurrection. He shewed him not publicly indeed, it was not open in that sense, but *evidently*. Not to all the people, who had been the witnesses of his death; by resisting all the evidences he had given them of his divine mission in his miracles, they had forfeited the favour of being eye witnesses of this great proof of it; they who immediately forged and promoted that lye of his being stolen away, were justly given up to *strong delusions* to believe it, and not suffered to be undeceived by his being shewn to all the people; and so much the greater shall be the blessedness of those who *have not seen, and yet have believed*. *Nec ille se in vulgus edixit, ne impii errore liberarentur; ut & fides non præmio mediocri destinato difficultate constaret*. Tert. Apol. cap. xi. But though all the people did not see him, there were enow saw him to attest the truth of his resurrection; the testator's declaring his last will and testament needs not to be before all the people, it is enough that it be done before

fore a competent number of credible witnesses ; so the resurrection of Christ was proved before sufficient witnesses. 1. They were not *so by chance*, but they were *chosen before of God* to be witnesses of it ; and in order to that, had their education under the Lord Jesus, and intimate converse with him, that having known him so intimately before, they might the better be assured it was he. 2. They had not a sudden and transient view of him, but a great deal of free conversation with him, they did *eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead* : This implies that they saw him *eat and drink*, witness their dining with him at the sea of Tiberias ; and the two disciples supping with him at Emmaus ; and this proved that he had a true and real body. But this was not all, they saw him without any terror or consternation, which might have rendered them incompetent witnesses, for they saw him so frequently, and he conversed with them so familiarly, that *they did eat and drink with him*. It is brought as a proof of the clear view which the nobles of Israel had of the glory of God, *Exod. xxiv. 11. that they saw God, and did eat and drink*.

Fourthly, He concludes with an inference from all this, that therefore, that which they all ought to do, was to *believe* in this Jesus. He was sent to tell Cornelius what he *must do*, and this is it ; his praying, and his giving alms, was very well, but one thing he lacked, he must *believe in Christ*. Observe,

1. Why he must *believe* in him ; faith is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, it is built upon the testimony given be them.

1. By the apostles ; Peter as foreman speaks for the rest, that God *commanded them*, and gave them in charge to *preach to the people, and to testify* concerning Christ ; so that their testimony was not only credible, but authentick, and what we may venture upon. Their testimony is God's testimony ; and they are his witnesses to the world ; they do not only say it as matter of news, but testify it as matter of record, by which men must be judged.

2. By the prophets of the Old Testament ; whose testimony before-hand, not only concerning his sufferings, but concerning the design and intention of them, doth very much corroborate the apostles testimony concerning them, *ver. 43. To him gave all the prophets witness*, &c. We have reason to think, Cornelius and his friends were no strangers to the writings of the prophets. Out of the mouth of these two clouds of witnesses so exactly agreeing *this word is established*.

2. What they must believe concerning him.

1. That we are all accountable to Christ as our judge ; this the apostles were commanded to testify to the world, that this Jesus is *ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead*, *ver. 42*. He is impowered to prescribe the terms of salvation, that rule by which we must be judged ; to give laws both to *quick and dead*, both to Jew and Gentile ; and he is appointed to determine the everlasting condition of all the children of men at the great day ; of those that shall be found *alive*, and of those that shall be raised from the *dead*. He hath assured us of this, in that he hath *raised him from the dead*, *Acts xvii. 31*. so that it is the great concern of every one of us in the belief of this to seek his favour, and to make him our friend.

2. That if we believe in him, we shall all be justified by him as our righteousness, *ver. 43*. The prophets when they spoke of the death of Christ, did witness this, *that through his name*, for his sake, and upon the account of his merit, *whosoever believeth in him*, Jew or Gentile, *shall receive remission of sins*. That is the great thing we need, without which we are undone, and which the convinced conscience is most inquisitive after which the carnal Jews promised themselves from their ceremonial sacrifices and purifications ; yea, and the heathen too from their atonements ; but all in vain, it is to be had only *through the name of Christ*, and only by those that *believe in his name*, and they that do so may be assured of it ; their sins shall be pardoned, and there shall be no condemnation to them. And the remission of sins, lays a foundation for all other favours and blessings, by taking that out of the way that hinders them. If sin be pardoned, all is well ; and shall end everlastingly well.

44. ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45. And they of the circumcision which believed were, astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the holy Ghost : 46. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the holy Ghost as well as we ? 48. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

We have here the issue and effect of Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his friends. He did not labour in vain among them, but they were all brought home to Christ, here we have,

First, God's owning Peter's word, by conferring the holy Ghost upon the hearers of it, and immediately upon the hearing of it, *ver. 44. While Peter was yet speaking these words*, and, perhaps,

designed to say more, he was happily superseded by visible indications that *the holy Ghost*, even in his miraculous gifts and powers, *fell on all them which heard the word*, even as he did on the apostles at first ; so, Peter saith, *chap. xi. 15*. Therefore some think it was with a *rustling mighty wind*, and in *cloven tongues*, as that was. Observe,

1. When the holy Ghost fell upon them : While Peter was preaching. Thus God bare witness to what he said, and accompanied it with a divine power. Thus were the *signs of an apostle wrought among them*, *2 Cor. xii. 12*. Though Peter could not give the holy Ghost, yet the holy Ghost being given along with the word of Peter ; by that it appeared he was sent of God. The holy Ghost fell upon others after they were baptized, for their confirmation ; but upon these Gentiles before they were baptized, as Abraham was justified by faith, being yet in uncircumcision, to shew that God is not tied to a method, nor confines himself to external signs. The holy Ghost fell upon those that were neither *circumcized nor baptized* ; for it is *the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing*.

2. How it appeared that the holy Ghost was fallen upon them, *ver. 46. They spake with tongues* which they never learned, perhaps, the Hebrew, the holy tongue ; as the preachers were enabled to speak the vulgar tongues, that they might communicate the doctrine of Christ to the hearers, so probably the hearers were immediately taught the sacred tongue, that they might examine the proofs which the preachers produced out of the Old Testament in the original. Or, their being enabled to *speak with tongues*, intimated that they were all designed for ministers, and by this first descent of the Spirit upon them, were qualified to preach the gospel to others, which they did but now receive themselves. But, observe, when they spake with tongues they magnified God, they spoke of Christ and the benefits of redemption, which Peter had been preaching of, to the *glory of God*. Thus did they on whom the holy Ghost first descended, *chap. ii. 11*. Note, Whatever gift we are endued with, we ought to honour God with it, and particularly the gift of speaking, and all the improvements of it.

3. What impression it made upon the believing Jews that were present, *ver. 45. They of the circumcision which believed, were astonished* ; those six that came along with Peter ; it surprized them exceedingly, and, perhaps, gave them some uneasiness, because that *upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the holy Ghost*, which they thought had been appropriated to their own nation. Had they understood the scriptures of the Old Testament which pointed at this, it would not have been such an astonishment to them ; but by our mistaken notions of things we create difficulties to ourselves in the methods of divine providence and grace.

Secondly, Peter's owning God's work in baptizing those on whom the holy Ghost fell. Observe,

1. Though they had *received the holy Ghost*, yet it was requisite they should be baptized ; though God is not tied to instituted ordinances, we are ; and no extraordinary gifts set us above them, but rather oblige us so much the more to conform to them. Some in our days would have argued, these are *baptized with the holy Ghost*, and therefore what need have they to be *baptized with water*, it is below them. No ; it is not below them, while water baptism is an ordinance of Christ, and the door of admission into the visible church, and a seal of the new covenant.

2. Though they were Gentiles, yet having *received the holy Ghost*, they might be admitted to baptism, *ver. 47. Can any man, though never so rigid a Jew, forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the holy Ghost as well as we ?* The argument is conclusive ; can we deny the sign to those who have received the thing signified ? Are not those on whom God has bestowed the grace of the covenant, plainly entitled to the seals of the covenant ? Surely they that have *received the Spirit as well as we*, ought to receive baptism as well as we ; for it becomes us to follow God's indications, and to take those into communion with us, whom he hath taken into communion with himself ? God hath promised to *pour his Spirit upon the seed of the faithful*, upon their *offspring*, and who then can forbid water that they should not be baptized, who have *received the promise of the holy Ghost* as well as we ? Now it appears why the Spirit was given them before they were baptized, because otherwise Peter could not have persuaded himself to baptize them, no more than to have preached to them, if he had not been ordered to do it by a vision ; at least, could not have avoided the censure of *these of the circumcision that believed*. Thus is there one unusual step of divine grace taken after another, to bring the Gentiles into the church. How well is it for us that the grace of a good God is so much more extensive, than the charity even of some good men !

3. Peter did not baptize them himself, but *commanded them to be baptized*, *ver. 40*. It is likely, some of the brethren who came with him, did it by his order, and that he declined it for the same reason that Paul did, lest those that were baptized by him, should think the better of themselves for it ; or he should seem to *have baptized in his own name*, *1 Cor. i. 17*. The apostles received the commission to *go and disciple all nations by baptism* : But it was prayer and the ministry of the word, that they were to give themselves to. And Paul saith, that he was sent not to baptize, but to preach ; which was the more noble and excellent work. The business of baptizing

baptizing was therefore ordinarily devolved upon the inferiour ministers, who acting by the apostles orders, they might be said to do it. *Qui per alterum facit, per seipsum facere dicitur.*

Lastly, Their owning both Peter's word, and God's work in their desire of further advantage by Peter's ministry; *they prayed him to tarry certain days.* They could not press him to reside constantly among them, they knew he had work to do in other places, and that for the present he was expected at Jerusalem; yet they were not willing he should go away immediately, but earnestly begged he would stay for some time among them, that they might be further instructed by him in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Note, 1. Those who have some acquaintance with Christ cannot but covet more. 2. Even those that have received the holy Ghost, yet must see their need of the ministry of the word.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Peter's necessary vindication of what he did in receiving Cornelius and his friends into the church, from the censure he lay under for it, among the brethren, and their acquiescence in it, ver. 1,—18. (2.) The good success of the gospel at Antioch, and the parts adjacent, ver. 19,—21. (3.) The carrying on of the good work that was begun at Antioch, by the ministry of Barnabas first, and afterwards of Paul in conjunction with him, and the lasting name of Christian first given to the disciples there, ver. 22,—26. (4.) A prediction of an approaching famine, and the contribution that was made among the Gentile converts for the relief of the poor saints in Judea upon that occasion, ver. 27,—50.

1. **A**ND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3. Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, 5. I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me. 6. Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter, slay and eat. 8. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 10. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11. And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me. 12. And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13. And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter: 14. Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15. And as I began to speak, the holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the holy Ghost. 17. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God? 18. When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The preaching of the gospel to Cornelius, was a thing which we poor sinners of the Gentiles have reason to reflect upon with a great deal of joy and thankfulness; for it was the bringing of light to us who sat in darkness. Now it being so great a surprize to the believing, as well as the unbelieving Jews, it is worth while to enquire, how it took; and what comments were made upon it? And here we find,

First, That intelligence was presently brought of it to the church in Jerusalem, and thereabouts; for Cesarea was not so far from Jerusalem, but that they might presently hear of it. Some for goodwill, and some for illwill, would spread the report of it; so that before he was himself returned to Jerusalem, the apostles and the brethren there, and in Judea, heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God, that his, the gospel of Christ, which is not only a word of God, but the word of God; for it is the summary

and center of all divine revelation. They received Christ; for his name is called, the Word of God, Rev. xix. 13. Not only that the Jews who were dispersed into the Gentile countries, and the Gentiles that were profelyted to the Jewish religion, but that the Gentiles also themselves, with whom it had hitherto been thought unlawful to hold common conversation, were taken into church communion, that they had received the word of God. That is,

1. That the word of God was preached to them; which was a greater honour put upon them than they expected. Yet I wonder this should seem strange to those who were themselves commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature. But thus often are the prejudices of pride and bigotry held fast against the clearest discoveries of divine truth.

2. That it was entertained and submitted to by them, which was a better work wrought upon them than they expected. It is likely they had got a notion, that if the gospel were preached to the Gentiles, it would be to no purpose, because the proofs of the gospel were fetched so much out of the Old Testament, which the Gentiles did not receive; they looked upon them as not inclined to religion, nor likely to receive the impressions of it; and therefore were surprized to hear that they had received the word of the Lord. Note. We are too apt to despair of doing good to those, who yet, when they are tried prove very tractable.

Secondly, That offence was taken at it by the believing Jews, ver. 2, 3. When Peter was himself come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision, those Jewish converts that still retained a veneration for circumcision, contended with him, they charged it upon him as a crime, that he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them, and thereby they think he hath stained, if not forfeited the honour of his apostleship, and ought to come under the censure of the church; so far were they from looking upon him as infallible, or as the supreme head of the church, that all were accountable to, and he to none. See here,

1. How much it is the bane and damage of the church to monopolize it, and to exclude those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, that are not in every thing as we are. There are narrow souls that are for engrossing the riches of the church, as there are that would engross the riches of the world, and would be placed alone in the midst of the earth. These men were of Jonah's mind, who in a jealousy for his people, was angry that the Ninevites received the word of God, and justified himself in it.

2. That Christ's ministers must not think it strange if they be censured and quarrelled with, not only by their professed enemies, but by their professing friends, and not only by their follies and infirmities, but for their good actions, seasonably and well done; but if we have proved our own work, we may have rejoicing in ourselves, as Peter had, whatever reflexions we may have from our brethren. Those that are zealous and courageous in the service of Christ, must expect to be censured by those that, under pretence of being cautious, are cold and indifferent. Those that are of catholic, generous charitable principles must expect to be censured by such as are conceited and strait-laced, that say, stand by thyself, I am holier than thou.

Thirdly, Peter gave such a full and fair account of the matter of fact as was sufficient, without any further argument or apology, both to justify him, and to satisfy them, ver. 4. He rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and laid it before them in order, and then could appeal to themselves, whether he had done amiss; for it appeared all along God's own work, and not his.

1. He takes it for granted, that if they had rightly understood how the matter was, they would not have contended with him, but rather have concurred with him, and commended him. And it is a good reason why we should be moderate in our censures, and sparing of them, because if we rightly understood that which we are so forward to run down, perhaps, we should see cause to run in with it. When we see others do that which looks suspicious, instead of contending with them, we should enquire of them, what ground they went upon; and if we have not an opportunity to do that, should ourselves put the best construction upon it that it will bear; and judge nothing before the time.

2. He is very willing to stand right in their opinion, and takes pains to give them satisfaction; doth not insist upon his being the chief of the apostles for he was far from the thought of that supremacy which his pretended successors claim. Nor did he think it enough to tell them, he was satisfied himself in the grounds he went upon, and then what need they trouble themselves about it; but is ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him concerning the Gentiles, and why he had receded from his former sentiments, which were the same with theirs. It is a debt we owe both to ourselves and to our brethren to set those actions of ours in a true light, which at first lookt ill, and gave offence; that we may remove stumbling-blocks out of our brethrens way.

Let us now see what Peter pleads in his own defence:

1. That he was instructed by a vision no longer to keep up the distinctions which were made by the ceremonial law; he relates the vision, ver. 5, 6. as we had it before, chap. x. 9, &c. The sheet which was there said to be let down to the earth, he here saith came even to him, which circumstance intimates, that it was particularly

cularly designed for instruction to him. We should thus see all God's discoveries of himself which he has made to the children of men, coming even to us, applying them by faith to ourselves. Another circumstance here added is, that when the sheet came to him, he fastened his eyes upon it, and considered it, ver. 6. If we would be led into the knowledge of divine things, we must fix our minds upon them, and consider them, he tells them what orders he had to eat of all sorts of meat without distinction, asking no questions for conscience sake, ver. 7. It was not till after the flood, as it should seem, that man was allowed to eat flesh at all, Gen. ix. 3. That allowance was afterwards limited by the ceremonial law; but, now the restrictions were taken off, and the matter set at large again. It was not the design of Christ to abridge us in the use of our creature comforts by any other law but that of sobriety, and temperance, and preferring the meat that endures to eternal life, before that which perisheth.

He pleads, that he was as averse to the thoughts of conversing with Gentiles, or eating of their dainties, as they could be, and therefore refused the liberty given him, *Not so Lord; for, nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth*, ver. 8. But he was told from heaven, that the case was now altered, that God had cleansed those persons and things which were before polluted, and therefore he must no longer call them common, nor look upon them as unfit to be meddled with by the peculiar people, ver. 9. So that he was not to be blamed for changing his thoughts, when God had changed the thing. In things of this nature, we must act according to our present light; yet must not be so wedded to our opinion concerning them, as to be prejudiced against further discoveries, when the matter may either be otherwise, or appear otherwise; and God may reveal even this unto us, Phil. iii. 15.

And that they might be sure he was not deceived in it, he tells them, it was done three times, ver. 10. the same command given, to kill and eat, and the same reason, because that which God hath cleansed is not to be called common, repeated a second and third time. And further to confirm him, that it was a divine vision, the things he saw did not vanish away into the air, but were drawn up again into heaven, whence they were let down.

2. That he was particularly directed by the Spirit to go along with the messengers that Cornelius sent. And that it might appear that that vision was designed to satisfy him in that matter, he observes to them, the time when the messengers came, immediately after he had that vision; yet lest that should not be sufficient to clear his way, the Spirit bid him go with the men that were then sent from Cesarea to him, nothing doubting, ver. 11, 12. though they were Gentiles he went to, and went with, yet he must make no scruple of going along with them.

3. That he took some of his brethren along with him, who were of the circumcision, that they might be satisfied as well as he; and these he had brought up from Joppa, to witness for him with what caution he proceeded, foreseeing the offence that would be taken at it. He did not act separately, but with advice, not rashly, but upon due deliberation.

4. That Cornelius had a vision too, by which he was directed to send for Peter, ver. 13. He shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, that bad him send to Joppa for one Simon whose surname is Peter. See how good it is for those that have communion with God, and keep up a correspondence with heaven, to compare notes, and communicate their experiences to each other; for hereby they may strengthen one another's faith: Peter is the more confirmed in the truth of his vision by Cornelius's, and Cornelius by Peter's. Here is something added in what the angel said to Cornelius; before it was, send for Peter, and he shall speak to thee, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do, chap. x. 6, 32. But here it is, he shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved, ver. 13. and therefore it is of vast concern to thee, and will be of unspeakable advantage, to send for him. Note, 1. The words of the gospel, are words whereby we may be saved, eternally saved; not merely by hearing them and reading them, but by believing and obeying them. They set the salvation before us, and shew us what it is, they open the way of salvation to us, and if we follow the method prescribed us by them, we shall certainly be saved from wrath and the curse, and be for ever happy. 2. They that embrace the gospel of Christ, will have salvation brought by it to their families: Thou and all thy house shall be saved; Thou and thy children shall be taken into covenant, and have the means of salvation; thy house shall be as welcome to the benefit of the salvation, upon their believing, as thou thyself, even the meanest servant thou hast. This day is salvation come to this house, Luke xix. 9. Hitherto salvation was of the Jews, John iv. 22. But now salvation is brought to the Gentiles, as much as ever it was with the Jews; the promises, privileges and means of it conveyed to all nations, as amply and fully to all intents and purposes, as ever it had been appropriated to the Jewish nation.

5. That which put the matter past all dispute, was the descent of the holy Ghost upon the Gentile hearers; this completed the evidence, that it was the will of God that he should take the Gentiles into communion.

1. The fact was plain and undeniable, ver. 15. As I began to speak, (and, perhaps, he left some secret reluctance in his own breast, doubting whether he was in the right to preach to the uncircum-

cised,) presently, the holy Ghost fell on them, in as visible signs, as on us at the beginning, in which there could be no fallacy. Thus God attested what was done, and declared his approbation of it; that preaching is certainly right with which the holy Ghost is given: The apostle supposeth that, when he thus argues with the Galatians, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal. iii. 2.

2. Peter was hereby put in mind of a saying of his Master's when he was leaving them, chap. i. 5. John baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the holy Ghost, ver. 16. Which plainly intimated, 1. That the holy Ghost was the gift of Christ, and the product and performance of his promise, that great promise which he left with them when he went to heaven. It was therefore without doubt from him that this gift came; and the filling of them with the holy Ghost, was his act and deed. As it was promised by his mouth, so it was performed by his hand, and was a token of his favour. 2. That the gift of the holy Ghost was a kind of baptism. They that received it were baptized with it in a more excellent manner, than any of those that even the baptist himself baptized with water.

3. Comparing that promise, so worded, with this gift just now conferred, when the question was started, whether these persons should be baptized or no? he concluded, that the question was determined by Christ himself, ver. 17. For as much then as God gave them the like gift as he did to us; gave it to us as believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to them upon their believing in him, What was I that I could withstand God? Could I refuse to baptize them with water, whom God had baptized with the holy Ghost? Could I deny the sign to those on whom he had conferred the thing signified? But as for me, who was I? What? able to forbid God? Did it become me to controul the divine will? or to oppose the counsels of heaven. Note, Those that hinder the conversion of souls, withstand God; and those take too much upon them, who contrive how to exclude those from their communion, whom God has taken into communion with himself.

Fourthly, This account which Peter gave of the matter, satisfied them; and all was well. Thus when the two tribes and a half gave an account to Phineas and the princes of Israel of the true intent and meaning of their building them an altar on the banks of Jordan, the controversy was dropped, and it pleased them that it was so, Josh. xxii. 30. Some people, when they have fastened a censure upon a person, will stick to it, though afterwards it appear never so plainly to be unjust and groundless. It was not so here; for these brethren, though they were of the circumcision, and their bias went the other way, yet when they heard this;

1. They let fall their censures; they held their peace, and said no more against what Peter had done; they laid their hand upon their mouth, because now they perceived that God did it. Now they who prided themselves in their dignities as Jews, began to see that God was staining that pride, by letting in the Gentiles to share and share-like with them: And now that prophecy is fulfilled, Thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain, Zeph. iii. 11.

2. They turned them into praises; they not only held their peace from quarrelling with Peter; but opened their mouths to glorify God for what he had done by and with Peter's ministry; were thankful that their mistake was rectified, and that God had shewed more mercy to the poor Gentiles than they were inclined to shew them, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life! Hath granted them not only the means of repentance, in opening a door of entrance for his ministers among them but the grace of repentance, in having given them his holy Spirit, who, wherever he comes to be a comforter, first convinceth; and gives a sight of sin first, and sorrow for it; and then a sight of Christ, and joy in him, Note, Repentance, if it be true, is unto life; it is to spiritual life; all that truly repent of their sins evidence it by living a new life, a holy, heavenly, and divine life. Those that by repentance die unto sin, from thence forward live unto God; and then, and not till then we begin to live indeed; and it shall be to eternal life. All true penitents shall live, i. e. They shall be restored to the favour of God, which is life, which is better than life; they shall be comforted with the assurance of the pardon of their sins, and shall have the earnest of eternal life, and at length the fruition of it.

2. Repentance is God's gift; it is not only his free grace that accepts it, but his mighty grace that works it in us; that takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh: The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; it is he that provides himself that lamb. 3. Wherever God designs to give life, he gives repentance; for that is a necessary preparative for the comforts of a sealed pardon, and a settled peace in this world, and for the seeing and enjoying of God in the other world. 4. It is a great comfort to us that God hath exalted his Son Jesus, not only to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins. Acts v. 31. but to the Gentiles also.

19. ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only, 20. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord

Jesus. 21. And the hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem : and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23. Who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24. For he was a good man, and full of the holy Ghost, and of faith : and much people was added unto the Lord. 25. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul. 26. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people ; and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

We have an account of the planting and watering of a church at Antioch, the chief city of Syria, reckoned afterwards the third most considerable city of the empire, only Rome and Alexandria being preferred before it, next to whose Patriarch, that of Antioch took place. It stood where Hamath or Riblah did, which we read of in the Old Testament. It is suggested, that Luke the penman of this history was of Antioch, and Theophilus, to whom he dedicates it ; which might be the reason why he takes more particular notice of the success of the gospel at Antioch ; as also because there it was that Paul began to be famous, the story of whom he is hastening towards.

Now concerning the church at Antioch, observe,

First, That the first preachers of the gospel there, were such as were dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution, that persecution which arose five or six years ago (as some compute) at the time of Stephen's death, *ver. 19. They travelled as far as Phenice*, and other places, *preaching the word*. Therefore God suffered them to be persecuted, that thereby they might be dispersed in the world, sown as seed to God, in order to their bringing forth much fruit. Thus what was intended for the hurt of the church, was made to work for its good ; as Jacob's curse of the tribe of Levi, *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel*, was turned into a blessing. The enemies designed to scatter and lose them, Christ designed to scatter and use them. Thus the wrath of man is made to praise God. Observe,

1. Those that *fled from persecution*, yet did not *flee from their work* ; though for the time they declined suffering, yet they did not decline service ; nay, they threw themselves into a larger field of opportunity than before. Those that persecuted the preachers of the gospel, hoped thereby to prevent their carrying it to the Gentile world ; but it proved that they did but hasten it the sooner. *Howbeit, they meant not so, neither did their heart think so*. They that were persecuted in one city, fled to another, but they carried their religion along with them, not only that they might take the comfort of it themselves, but that they might communicate it to others ; thus shewing, that when they got out of the way, it was not because they were afraid of suffering, but because they were willing to reserve themselves for further service.

2. They *pressed forward* in their work, finding that the *good pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands*. When they had preached successfully in Judea, Samaria and Galilee, they got out of the borders of the land of Canaan, and travelled into Phenicia, into the island of Cyprus, and into Syria. Though the further they travelled, the more they exposed themselves ; yet they travelled on ; *plus ultra*, was their motto, further still ; grudging no pains, and dreading no perils in carrying on so good a work, and serving so good a Master.

3. They *preached the word to none but to the Jews only*, who were dispersed in all those parts, and had synagogues of their own, in which they met with them by themselves, and preached to them. They did not yet understand that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body ; but left the Gentiles either to turn Jews, and so come into the church, or else remain as they were.

4. They particularly applied themselves to the Hellenist Jews, here called the Grecians, that were at Antioch. Many of the preachers were natives of Judea and Jerusalem ; but some of them were by birth of Cyprus and Cyrene, as Barnabas himself, *chap. iv. 36.* and Simon, *Mark xv. 21.* but had their education in Jerusalem ; and these being themselves Grecian Jews, had a particular concern for those of their own denomination and distinction, and applied themselves closely to them at Antioch. Dr. Lightfoot saith, they were there called Hellenists or Grecians, because they were Jews, of the corporation, or enfranchisement of the city ; for Antioch was a Syro-grecian city. To them they *preached the Lord Jesus*. That was the constant subject of their preaching ; what else should the ministers of Christ preach, but Christ ? Christ, and him crucified ; Christ, and him glorified ?

5. They had wonderful success in their preaching, *ver. 21.* 1. Their preaching was accompanied with a divine power ; *The hand of the Lord was with them*. Which some understand of the power they were endued with to *work miracles*, for the confirming of their doctrine ; in these the Lord was *working with them*, that he con-

firmed the word with signs following, *Mark xvi. 20.* in these God *bare them witness*, *Heb. ii. 4.* But I rather understand it of the power of divine grace working on the hearts of the hearers, and opening them, as Lydia's heart was opened, because many saw the miracles that were not converted, but when by the Spirit the understanding was enlightened and the will bowed to the gospel of Christ, that was a day of power, in which volunteers were lifted under the banner of the Lord Jesus, *Psal. xi. 3. The hand of the Lord was with them* to bring that home to the hearts and consciences of men, which they could but speak to the outward ear. Then the word of the Lord gains its end, when the *hand of the Lord* goes along with it to write it in their heart. Then people are brought to *believe the report* of the gospel, when with it the *arm of the Lord is revealed*, *Isa. liii. 1. when God teacheth with a strong hand*, *Isa. viii. 11.* These were not apostles, but ordinary ministers, yet they had the *hand of the Lord with them*, and did wonders.

2. Abundance of good was done ; *a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord*, many more than could have been expected, considering the outward disadvantages they laboured under ; some of all sorts of people were wrought upon, and brought into obedience to Christ. Observe, What the change was : 1. They believed ; they were convinced of the truth of the gospel, and subscribed to the record God had given in it concerning his Son. 2. The effect and evidence of this was, that they *turned unto the Lord* ; they could not be said to turn from the service of idols, for they were Jews, worshippers of the true God only ; but they turned from a confidence in the righteousness of the law, to rely only upon the righteousness of Christ ; the righteousness which is by faith : They turned from a loose, careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual and divine life ; they turned from worshipping God in shew and ceremony, to worship him *in the Spirit and in truth*. They *turned to the Lord Jesus*, and he became *all in all* with them. This was the work of conversion wrought upon them ; and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith ; all that sincerely *believe, will turn to the Lord* ; for whatever we profess, or pretend, we do not really believe the gospel, if we do not cordially embrace Christ offered to us in the gospel.

Secondly, The good work thus begun at Antioch, was carried on to a great perfection ; and this church thus founded, grew to be a flourishing one, by the ministry of Barnabas and Saul, who built upon the foundation which the other preachers had laid, and *entered into their labours*, *John iv. 37, 38.*

1. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas thither, to nurse this new-born church, and to strengthen the hands both of preachers and people, and put a reputation upon the cause of Christ there.

1. They heard the good news that the gospel was received at Antioch, *ver. 22.* The apostles there were inquisitive how the work went on in the countries about ; and, it is likely, kept up a correspondence with all parts where preachers were, so that *tidings of these things*, of the great numbers that were converted at Antioch, soon came to the ears of the church that was in Jerusalem. Those that are in the most eminent stations in the church, ought to concern themselves for those in a lower sphere.

2. They dispatched Barnabas to them with all speed ; they desired him to go and assist, and encourage these hopeful beginnings. They *sent him forth* as an envoy from them, and a representative of their whole body, to congratulate them upon the success of the gospel among them, as matter of rejoicing both to *preachers and hearers*, and with *both* they rejoiced. He must go as far as Antioch. It was a great way, but, as far as it was, he was willing to undertake the journey, for a publick service. It is probable Barnabas had a particular genius for work of this kind, was active and conversable, and loved to be in motion, delighted in doing good abroad, as much as others in doing good at home, was as much of Zebulon's spirit who rejoiced *in his going out*, as others are of Issachar's, who rejoiced *in his tent*, and his talent lying this way, he was fittest to be employed in this work. God gives various gifts for various services.

3. Barnabas was wonderfully pleased to find that the gospel got ground, and that some of his countrymen, men of Cyprus, *ver. 20.* (of which country he was, *chap. iv. 36.*) were instrumental in it, *ver. 23. when he came, and had seen the grace of God*, the tokens of God's good will to the people of Antioch, and the evidences of his good work among them, *he was glad*. He took time to make his observations, and both in their publick worship, in their common conversation, and in their families he saw the *grace of God* among them ; where the grace of God is, it will be *seen*, as the *tree is known by its fruits* ; and, where it is seen, it ought to be owned ; what we see which is good in any, we must call it *God's grace* in them, and give that grace the glory of it ; and we ought ourselves to take the comfort of it, and make it the matter of our rejoicing. We must be *glad to see the grace of God* in others, and the more when we see it there where we did not expect it.

4. He did what he could to fix them ; and to confirm them in the faith, who were converted to the faith. He exhorted them, *παρακαλεῖ*. It is the same word with that by which the name of Barnabas is interpreted, *chap. iv. 36. υἱὸς παρακλήσεως, a son of exhortation* ; his talent lay that way, and he traded with it ; let him that *exhorteth* attend to *exhortation*, *Rom. xii. 8.* Or, being a

son of consolation, for so we render the word, he *comforted, or encouraged them with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord*. The more he rejoiced in the beginning of the good work among them, the more earnest he was with them to proceed according to these good beginnings. Those we have comfort in, we should exhort. Barnabas was glad for what he saw of the grace of God among them, and therefore was the more earnest with them to persevere. 1. To *cleave to the Lord*. Note, Those that have *turned to the Lord*, are concerned to *cleave unto the Lord*, not to fall off from following him, not to flag and tire in following him. To *cleave to the Lord Jesus*, is to live a life of dependence upon him, and devotedness to him; not only to *hold him fast*, but to *hold fast by him*, to be *strong in the Lord*, and in the *power of his might*. 2. To cleave to him with *purpose of heart*, with an intelligent, firm, and deliberate resolution, founded upon good grounds, and fixed upon that foundation, *Psal. cxviii. 1*. It is to bind our souls with a bond to be the Lord's, and to say, as Ruth, *intreat me not to leave him, or to return from following after him*.

5. Herein he gave a proof of his good character, *ver. 24. He was a good man, and full of the holy Ghost, and of faith*, and approved himself so upon this occasion. 1. He shewed himself to be a man of a very sweet, affable, courteous disposition, that had himself, and could teach others, the art of obliging. *He was not only a righteous man, but a good man*, a good tempered man. Ministers that are so, recommend themselves and their doctrine very much to the good opinion of those that are without. He was a good man, *i. e.* a charitable man; so he had approved himself, when he sold an estate, and gave the money to the poor, *chap. iv. 36*. 2. By this it appeared that he was richly endued with the gifts and graces of the Spirit. The goodness of his natural disposition, would not have qualified him for this service, if he had not been *full of the holy Ghost, and so full of power, by the Spirit of the Lord*. 3. He was full of faith, full of the Christian faith himself, and therefore desirous to propagate it among others; full of the grace of faith, and full of the fruits of that faith that works by love. *He was found in the faith*, and therefore pressed them to be so.

6. He was instrumental to do good, by bringing in those that were without, as well as by building up those that were within; *much people were added to the Lord*, and thereby added to the church; *many were turned to the Lord* before, yet more are to be turned; it is *done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room*.

2. Barnabas went to fetch Saul to join with him in the work of the gospel at Antioch. The last news we heard of him was, that when his life was sought at Jerusalem, he was sent away to Tarsus, the city where he was born, and, it should seem, he continued there ever since, doing good, no doubt. But now Barnabas takes a journey on purpose to Tarsus, to see what was become of him, to tell him what a door of opportunity was opened at Antioch, and to desire him to come and spend some time with him there, *ver. 25, 26*. And here also it appears, that Barnabas was a good sort of a man in two things:

1. That he would take so much pains to bring an active useful man out of obscurity; it was he that introduced Saul to the disciples at Jerusalem, when they were shy of him; and it was he that brought him out of the corner into which he was driven, into a more publick station. It is a very good work to fetch a candle from under a bushel, and to set it on a candlestick.

2. That he would bring in Saul at Antioch, who being a *chief speaker* (*chap. xiv. 12.*) and probably a more *popular preacher* would be likely to eclipse him there, by outshining him; but Barnabas is very willing to be so when it is for the publick service. If God by his grace enables us to do what good we can, according to the ability we have, we ought to rejoice if others that have also larger capacities, have larger opportunities, and do more good than we can do. Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, though it might be the lessening of himself, to teach us to seek the things of Christ more than our own things.

Now here we are further told,

1. What service was now done to the church at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas continued there a whole year, presiding in their religious assemblies, and preaching the gospel, *ver. 26*. Observe, 1. The church frequently assembled. The religious assemblies of Christians are appointed by Christ for his honour, and the comfort and benefit of his disciples. God's people of old frequently came together, *at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*, places of meeting are now multiplied, but they must *come together*, though it be with difficulty and peril. 2. Ministers were the masters of those assemblies and held those courts in Christ's name, to which all that *hold by, from, and under him*, owe suit and service. 3. *Teaching the people* is one part of the work of ministers, when they preside in religious assemblies. They are not only to be the people's mouth to God in prayer and praise, but God's mouth to the people in opening the scriptures, and teaching out of them the good knowledge of the Lord. 4. It is a great encouragement to ministers when they have opportunity of teaching much people, of casting the net of the gospel where there is a large shoal of fish, in hopes that the more may be inclosed. Preaching is not only for the conviction and conversion of those that are without, but for the instruction and edification of those that are within. A constituted church must have its teachers.

2. What honour was now put upon the church at Antioch; there the disciples were first called *Christians*; it is likely they called themselves so, incorporated themselves by that title; whether by some solemn act of the church or ministers, or whether this name insensibly obtained there by its being frequently used in their praying and preaching, we are not told; but it should seem that two such great men as Paul and Barnabas continuing there so long, being exceedingly followed, and meeting with no opposition, Christian assemblies made a greater figure there than any where, and became more considerable, which was the reason of their being called *Christians first there*; which, if there were to be a mother church to rule over all other churches, would give Antioch a better title to the honour than Rome can pretend to: Hitherto they who gave up their names to Christ, were called disciples, learners, scholars, trained up under him, in order to their being employed by him; but from henceforward *they were called Christians*. 1. Thus the reproachful names which their enemies had hitherto branded them with, would, perhaps, be wiped away, and disused. They called them *Nazarenes*, *Acts xxiv. 5. the men of that way, that by-way*, which had no name; and thus they prejudiced people against them; to remove which prejudices they gave themselves a name, which their enemies could not but say was proper enough. 2. Thus they, who before their conversion had been distinguished by the names of Jew and Gentile, might after their conversion be called by one and the same name, which would help them to forget their former dividing names, and prevent their bringing their former marks of distinction, and, with them, the seeds of contention, into the church. Let not one say, I was a Jew; nor the other, I was a Gentile; when both the one and the other must now say, I am a Christian. 3. Thus they studied to do honour to their Master, and shewed that they were not ashamed to own their relation to him, but gloried in it, as the scholars of Plato called themselves Platonists, and so the scholars of other great men. They took their denomination not from the name of his person, Jesus, but of his office, Christ, anointed; so putting their creed into their name, *that Jesus is the Christ*; and they are willing all the world should know, that this is the truth they will live and die by: Their enemies will *turn this name to their reproach*, and impute it to them as their crime, but they will glory in it: *If this be to be vile, I will yet be more vile*. 4. Thus they owned their dependence upon Christ, and their receivings from him; not only that they believed in him who is *the Anointed*, but that through him they themselves had *the anointing*, 1 John ii. 20, 27. And God is said to have *anointed us in Christ*, 2 Cor. i. 21. 5. Thus they laid upon themselves, and all that should ever profess that name, a strong and lasting obligation to submit to the laws of Christ, to follow the example of Christ, and to devote themselves entirely to the honour of Christ; *to be to him for a name, and a praise*. Are we Christians? then we ought to think, and speak, and act in every thing as becomes Christians, and to do nothing to the reproach of that worthy name by which we are called; that that may not be said to us, which Alexander said to a soldier of his own name that was noted for a coward, *Aut nomen, aut merces muta*: Either change thy name, or mend thy manners. And as we must look upon ourselves as Christians, and carry ourselves accordingly, so we must look upon others as Christians, and carry ourselves towards them accordingly. A Christian, though not in every thing of our mind, should be loved and respected for his sake whose name he bears, because he belongs to Christ. 6. Thus *the scripture was fulfilled*, for so it was written, *Isa. lxii. 2.* concerning the gospel church, *Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name*. And, *Isa. lxv. 16.* it is said to the corrupt and degenerate church of the Jews, *The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name*.

27. ¶ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. 30. Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

When our Lord Jesus *ascended on high*, he gave gifts unto men, not only *apostles and evangelists*, but *prophets*, who were enabled by the Spirit to foresee and foretell things to come; which not only served for a confirmation of the truth of Christianity, for all that these prophets foretold came to pass, which proved that *they were sent of God*, Deut. xviii. 22. Jer. xxviii. 9. but it was also of great use to the church, and served very much for its conduct. Now here we have,

First, A visit which some of *these prophets* made to Antioch, *ver. 27. In these days*, during that year that Barnabas and Saul lived at Antioch, there came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch; we are not told how many, nor is it certain whether these were any

any of those *prophets* that we afterwards find in the church at Antioch, chap. xiii. 1.

1. They came from Jerusalem, probably, because they were not now so much regarded there as they had been; they saw their work in a manner done there, and therefore thought it time to be gone: Jerusalem had been infamous for killing the prophets, and abusing them, and therefore is now justly deprived of these prophets.

2. They came to Antioch, because they heard of the flourishing state of that church, and there they hoped they might be of some service. Thus should every one, as he hath received the gift, minister the same. Barnabas came to exhort them, and they having received the exhortation well, now have prophets sent them, to shew them things to come, as Christ had promised, John xvi. 13. They that are faithful in their little, shall be entrusted with more. The best understanding of scripture predictions, is to be got in the way of obedience to scripture instructions.

Secondly, A particular prediction of a famine approaching, delivered by one of these prophets, his name Agabus; we read of him again, prophesying Paul's imprisonment, chap. xxi. 10. Here he stood up, probably, in one of their publick assemblies, and prophesied, ver. 28. Observe,

1. Whence he had his prophecy: What he said was not of himself, nor a fancy of his own, nor an astronomical prediction, or a conjecture upon the present workings of second causes, but he signified it by the Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, that there should be a famine; as Joseph, by the Spirit enabling him, understood Pharaoh's dreams, foretold the famine in Egypt, and Elijah the famine in Israel, in Ahab's time. Thus God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets.

2. What the prophecy was: There should be great dearth throughout all the world, by unseasonable weather: That corn should be scarce and dear, so that many of the poor should perish for want of bread: This should be not in one particular country, but through all the world, i. e. all the Roman empire, which they in their pride, like Alexander before them, called the world. Christ had foretold in general, that there should be famines, Matt. xxiv. 7. Mark xiii. 8. Luke xx. 11. but Agabus foretels one very remarkable famine now at hand.

3. The accomplishment of it: It came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar; it began in the second year of his reign, and continued to the fourth, if not longer; several of the Roman historians make mention of it, as doth also Josephus. God sent them the bread of life, and they rejected it, lothed the plenty of that manna, and therefore God justly broke the staff of bread, and punished them with famine, and herein he was righteous: They were barren, and did not bring forth to God, and therefore God made the earth barren to them.

Thirdly, The good use they made of this prediction: When they were told of a famine at hand, they did not do as the Egyptians, hoard up corn for themselves, but, as became Christians, laid by for charity to relieve others, which is the best preparative for sufferings and want ourselves. It is promised to those that consider the poor, that God will preserve them, and keep them alive, and they shall be blessed upon the earth, Psalm xli. 1, 2. And those who shew mercy, and give to the poor, shall not be ashamed in the evil time, but in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, Psalm xxxvii. 19, 21. The best provision we can lay up against a dear time is, to lay up an interest in those promises, by doing good, and communicating, Luke xii. 33. Many give it for a reason why they should be sparing, but the scripture gives it as a reason why we should be liberal, to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth, Eccl. xi. 2. Observe,

1. What they determined: That every man, according to his ability, should send relief to the brethren that dwelt in Judea, ver. 29.

1. The persons that were recommended to them as objects of charity, were the brethren that dwelt in Judea. Though we must, as we have opportunity, do good to all men, yet we must have a special regard to the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10. No poor must be neglected, but God's poor most particularly regarded. The care which every particular church ought to take of their own poor, we were taught by the early instance of that in the church at Jerusalem, where the ministrations was so constant, that none lacked, Acts iv. 34. But the communion of saints, in that instance, is here extended further, and provision is made by the church at Antioch, for the relief of the poor in Judea, whom they call their brethren. It seems, it was the custom of the Jews of the dispersion, to send money to those Jews which dwelt in Judea, for the relief of the poor that were among them, and to make collections for that purpose; Tully speaks of such a thing in his time, Orat. pro Flacco; which supposeth there were many poor in Judea, more than in other countries, so that the rich among them were not able to bear the charge of keeping them from starving; either, because their land was grown barren, though it had been a fruitful land, for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein; or, because they had no traffick with other nations. Now we may suppose, that the greatest part of those who turned Christians in that country, were the poor, Matt. xi. 1. The poor are evangelized; and also, that, when the poor turned Christians, they were put out of the poor's book, and cut off from their shares in the publick charity; and it were easy to foresee, that, if there came a famine, it would go very

hard with them; and if any of them should perish for want, it would be a great reproach to the Christian profession; and therefore this early care was taken, upon notice of this famine coming, to send them a stock beforehand, lest, if it should be deferred till the famine came, it should be too late. 2. The agreement that was among the disciples about it; that every man should contribute, according to his ability, to this good work. The Jews abroad, in other countries, grew rich by trade, and many of the rich Jews became Christians, whose abundance ought to be a supply to the want of their poor brethren, that were at a great distance; for the case of such ought to be considered, and not only theirs that live among us. Charitable people are traders with what God has given them, and the merchants find their account in sending effects to countries that lie very remote, and so should we, in giving alms to those afar off that need them, which therefore we should be forward to do when we are called to it. Every man determined to send something, more or less, according to his ability, what he could spare from the support of himself and his family, and according as God had prospered him. What may be said to be according to our ability, we must judge for ourselves, but must be careful that we judge righteous judgment.

2. What they did, they did as they determined, ver. 30. Which also they did: They not only talked of it, but they did it. Many a good motion of that kind is made and commended, but is not profecuted, and so comes to nothing: But this was pursued, the collection was made, and was so considerable, that they thought it worth while to send Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem, to carry it to the elders there, though they would want their labours in the mean time at Antioch. They sent it, 1. To the elders, the presbyters, the ministers or pastors of the churches in Judea, to be by them distributed according to the necessity of the receivers, as it had been contributed according to the ability of the givers. 2. It was sent by Barnabas and Saul, who, perhaps, wanted an occasion to go to Jerusalem, and therefore were willing to take this. Josephus tells us, that, at this time, king Irates sent his charity to the chief men of Jerusalem, for the poor of that country; and Helena, queen of the Adiabeni, being now at Jerusalem, and hearing of many that died of famine there, and in the country about, sent for provisions from Cyprus and Alexandria, and distributed them among the people: So saith Dr. Lightfoot, who also computes, by the date of Paul's rapture, fourteen years before he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xii. 1, 2. that it was in this journey of his to Jerusalem, with these alms and offerings, that he had his trance in the temple, which he speaks of, Acts xxii. 17. and in that trance was rapt up into the third heaven; and then it was that Christ told him, he would send him from thence unto the Gentiles, which accordingly he did, as soon as ever he came back to Antioch. It is no disparagement, in an extraordinary case, for ministers of the gospel to be messengers of the church's charity; though, to undertake the constant care of that matter, would ordinarily be too great a diversion from more needful work, to those who have given themselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have the story, 1. Of the martyrdom of James the apostle, and the imprisonment of Peter, by Herod Agrippa, who now reigned as king in Judea, ver. 1,—4. 2. The miraculous deliverance of Peter out of prison by the ministry of an angel, in answer to the prayers of the church for him, ver. 5,—19. 3. The cutting off of Herod in the height of his pride by the stroke of an angel, the minister of God's justice, ver. 20,—23. And this was done while Barnabas and Saul were at Jerusalem, upon the errand that the church of Antioch sent them on to carry their charity; and therefore, in the close, we have an account of their return to Antioch, ver. 24, 25.

1. NOW about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) 4. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers, to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Ever since the conversion of Paul, we have heard no more of the agency of the priests in persecuting the saints at Jerusalem; perhaps, that wonderful change wrought upon him, and the disappointment it gave to their design upon the Christians at Damascus, had somewhat mollified them, and brought them under the check of Gamaliel's advice, to let those men alone, and see what would be the issue; but here the storm ariseth from another point, the civil power, not now as usual (for ought appears) stirred up by the ecclesiasticks, acts by itself in the persecution: But Herod, though originally of an Edomite family, yet seems to have been a profe-

profelyte to the Jewish religion; for Josephus saith, he was zealous for the Mosaic rites, a bigot for the ceremonies: He was not only (as Herod Antipas was) *tetrarch of Galilee*, but had also the government of Judea committed to him by Claudius the emperor, and resided most at Jerusalem, where he was at this time.

Three things we are here told he did:

First, He stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, ver. 1. His stretching forth his hands to it intimates, that his hands had been tied up, by the restraints which, perhaps, his own conscience held him under in this matter, but now he broke through them, and stretched forth his hands deliberately, and of malice prepense. Herod laid hands upon some of the church to afflict them, so some read it; he employed his officers to seize them, and take them into custody, in order to their being prosecuted. See how he advances gradually!

1. He began with some of the members of the church, certain of them that were of less note and figure; played first at small game, but afterwards slew at the apostles themselves: His spite was at the church, and those he gave trouble to, it was not upon any other account, but because they belonged to the church, and so belonged to Christ.

2. He began with vexing them only, or afflicting them, imprisoning them, fining them, spoiling their houses and goods, and other ways molesting them; but afterwards he proceeded to greater instances of cruelty. Christ's suffering servants are thus trained up by lesser troubles for greater, that tribulation may work patience, and patience experience.

Secondly, He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ver. 2. We are here to consider,

1. Who the martyr was; it was James the brother of John, so called, to distinguish him from the other James, the brother of Joseph: This was called *Jacobus major*, that *minor*. This thit was here crowned with martyrdom, was one of the first three of Christ's disciples, one of those that were the witnesses of his transfiguration and agony, whereby he was prepared for martyrdom; he was one of those whom Christ called *Boanerges*, sons of thunder, and, perhaps, by his powerful, awakening preaching, he had provoked Herod, or those about him, as John Baptist did the other Herod, and that was the occasion of his coming into this trouble: He was one of those sons of Zebedee, whom Christ told, that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, Matt. xx. 23. And now those words of Christ were made good in him; but it was in order to his sitting at Christ's right hand; for, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. He was one of the twelve, who were commissioned to disciple all nations, and to take him off now, before he was removed from Jerusalem, was like Cain's killing Abel then, when the world was to be peopled; and one man was then more than many at another time: To kill an apostle now, was killing he knew not how many. But why would God permit it? If the blood of his saints, much more the blood of apostles, is precious in his eyes, and therefore we may be sure is not shed but upon a valuable consideration: Perhaps, God intended hereby to awaken the rest of the apostles to disperse themselves among the nations, and not to nestle any longer at Jerusalem. Or it was to shew, that, though the apostles were appointed to plant the gospel in the world, yet, if they were taken off, God could do his work without them, and would do it. This apostle died a martyr, to shew the rest of them what they must expect, that they might prepare accordingly. The tradition that they have in the Romish church, that this James had been before this in Spain, and had planted the gospel there, is altogether groundless; nor is there any certainty of it, or good authority for it.

2. What the kind of his death was; he was slain with the sword, i. e. his head was cut off with a sword, which was looked upon by the Romans to be a more disgraceful way of being beheaded than with an ax; so Lorinus. Beheading was not ordinarily used among the Jews; but when kings gave verbal orders for private and sudden executions, this manner of death was used, as most expeditious; and, it is probable, this Herod killed James, as the other Herod killed John Baptist, privately in the prison. It is strange that we have not a more full and particular account of the martyrdom of this great apostle, as we had of Stephen! but even this short mention of the thing, is sufficient to let us know, that the first preachers of the gospel were so well assured of the truth of it, that they sealed it with their blood, and thereby have encouraged us, if at any time we are called to it, to resist unto blood too. The Old Testament martyrs were slain with the sword, Heb. xi. 37. and Christ came not to send peace, but a sword, Matt. x. 34. in preparation for which we must arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and then we need not fear what the sword of men can do unto us.

Thirdly, He imprisoned Peter, whom he had heard most of, as making the greatest figure among the apostles, and whom therefore he would be proud of the honour of taking off. Observe here,

1. When he had beheaded James, he proceeded further, he added, to take Peter also. Note, Blood to the blood-thirsty doth but make them more so, and the way of persecution, as of other sins, is down hill, when men are in it they cannot easily stop

themselves; when they are in, they find they must on; *Male facta male factis tegere ne perpluant*: They that take one bold step in a sinful way, give Satan advantage against them to tempt them to take another, and provoke God to leave them to themselves, to go from bad to worse: It is therefore our wisdom to take heed of the beginnings of sin.

2. He did this because he saw it pleased the Jews. Observe, The Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of James, by shewing themselves well pleased with it afterwards, though they had not excited Herod to it. There are accessories *ex post facto*, and they will be reckoned with as persecutors, that take pleasure in others persecuting, that delight to see good men ill used, and cry, *Aha, so would we have it*; or, at least, secretly approve of it: For bloody persecutors, when they perceive themselves applauded for that which every one ought to cry shame upon them for, are encouraged to go on, and have their hands strengthened, and their hearts hardened, and the checks of their own consciences smothered; nay, it is a strong temptation to them to do the like, as it was here to Herod, because he saw it pleased the Jews. Though he had no reason to fear displeasing them if he did not, as Pilate condemned Christ, yet he hoped to please them by doing it, and so to make an interest among them, and make amends for displeasing them in something else. Note, Those make themselves an easy prey to Satan, that make it their business to please men.

3. Notice is taken of the time when Herod laid hold on Peter: Then were the days of unleavened bread. It was at the feast of the passover, when their celebrating the memorial of their typical deliverance, should have led them to the acceptance of their spiritual deliverance; instead of that, they, under pretence of zeal for the law, were most violently fighting against it; and, in the days of unleavened bread, were most soured and embittered with the old leaven of malice and wickedness: At the passover, when the Jews came from all parts to Jerusalem to keep the feast, they irritated one another against the Christians, and Christianity, and were then more violent than at other times.

4. Here is an account of Peter's imprisonment, ver. 4. When he had laid hands on him, and, it is likely, examined him, he put him in prison, into the inner prison; some say, into the same prison into which he and the other apostles were cast some years before, and were then rescued out of it by an angel, chap. v. 18. He was delivered to four quarternions of soldiers, i. e. to sixteen, who were to be a guard upon him, four at a time, that he should not make his escape, or be rescued by his friends: Thus they thought they had him fast.

5. Herod's design was after Easter to bring him forth unto the people: (1.) He would make a spectacle of him. Probably; he had put James to death privately, which the people had complained of, not because it was an unjust thing to put a man to death without giving him a publick hearing, but because it deprived them of the satisfaction of seeing him executed; and therefore Herod, now he knows their minds, will gratify them with the sight of Peter in bonds, of Peter upon the block, that they may feed their eyes with such a pleasing spectacle: And very ambitious sure he was to please the people, who was willing thus to please them! (2.) He would do this after Easter, *μετὰ τὸ πάχα*, after the passover; certainly so it ought to be read; for it is the same word that is always so rendered; and to insinuate the introducing of a gospel feast, instead of the passover, when we have nothing in the New Testament of such a thing, is to mingle Judaism with our Christianity. Herod would not condemn him till the passover was over; some think, for fear lest he should have such an interest among the people, as that they should demand the release of him according to the custom of the feast: Or, after the hurry of the feast was over, and the town was empty, he would entertain them with Peter's publick trial and execution. Thus was the plot laid, and both Herod and the people long to have the feast over, that they may gratify themselves with this barbarous entertainment.

5. Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 6. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8. And the angel said unto him, Gird thy self, and bind on thy sandals: And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel: but thought he saw a vision. 10. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. 11. And when Peter

was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together, praying. 13. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 14. And when she knew Peters voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 16. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. 17. But he beckening unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. 18. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode.

We have here an account of Peter's deliverance out of prison, by which the design of Herod against him was defeated, and his life reserved for further service, and a stop given to this bloody torrent. Now,

First, One thing that magnified his deliverance was, that it was a signal answer to prayer, ver. 5. *Peter was kept in prison*, with a great deal of care, so that it was altogether impossible, either by force, or by stealth, to get him out; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him; for prayers and tears are the church's arms, therewith she fights, not only against her enemies, but for her friends; and to those means they have recourse.

1. The delay of Peter's trial gave them time for prayer: It is probable, James was hurried off so suddenly, and so privately, that they had not time to pray for him, God so ordering it, that they should not have space to pray, when he designed they should not have the thing they prayed for; James must be offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith, and therefore prayer for him is restrained and prevented; but Peter must be continued to them, and therefore prayer for him is stirred up, and time is given them for it, by Herod's putting off the prosecution, *Herod, he meant not so, neither did his heart think so*.

2. They were very particular in their prayers for him, that it would please God, some way or other, to defeat Herod's purpose, and to snatch the lamb out of the jaws of the lion. The death of James alarmed them to a greater fervency in their prayers for Peter; for if they be broken thus with breach upon breach, they fear that the enemy will make a full end: *Stephen is not, and James is not, and now they take Peter also; all these things are against them; this will be sorrow upon sorrow*, Phil. ii. 27. Note, Though the death and sufferings of Christ's ministers may be made greatly to serve the interests of Christ's kingdom, yet it is the duty and concern of the church, earnestly to pray for their life, liberty, and tranquillity; and sometimes providence orders it, that they are brought into imminent danger, to stir up prayer for them.

3. Prayer was made without ceasing; it was, *προσευχῇ ἐκέρως*, fervent prayer; it is the word that is used concerning Christ's praying in his agony more earnestly; it is the fervent prayer of the righteous man that is effectual, and achieveth much. Some think, it notes the constancy and continuance of their prayers; so we take it; they prayed without ceasing; it was an extended prayer; they prayed for his release in their publick assemblies, private ones, perhaps, for fear of the Jews; then they went home, and prayed for it in their families; then retired into their closets, and prayed for it there; so they prayed without ceasing. Or, first one knot of them, and then another, and then a third kept a day of prayer, or rather a night of prayer for him, ver. 12. Note, Times of publick distress and danger should be praying times with the church; we must pray always, but then especially.

Secondly, Another thing that magnified his deliverance was, that when the king's commandments and decree drew near to be put in execution, then his deliverance was wrought, as Esther ix. 2. Let us believe when his deliverance came.

1. It was the very night before Herod designed to bring him forth, so to make it to be so much the greater consolation to his friends, and affliction to his enemies. It is likely, some that had an interest in Herod, or were about him, had been improving it to get a exchange for Peter, but in vain; Herod resolves he shall die; and now their counsel of prevailing that way, for to-morrow is the day for his bringing to execution; and, it is likely, they will make a black work with it, as with his Master; and now God opened

a door of escape for him. Note, God's time to help is when things are brought to the last extremity, when there is none shut up or left, Deut. xxxii. 36. and for that reason it has been said, *the worse, the better*. When Isaac is bound upon the altar, and the knife in the hand, and the hand stretched out to slay him, then, *Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide*.

2. It was when he was fast bound with two chains, between two soldiers; so that if he offer to stir he wakes them; and, besides this, though the prison doors no doubt were locked and bolted, yet, to make sure work, the keepers before the door kept the prison, that no one might so much as attempt to rescue him. Never could the art of man do more to secure a prisoner! Herod, no doubt, said as Pilate, Matt. xxvii. 65. *Make it as sure as you can*. When men will think to be too hard for God, God will make it appear that he is too hard for them.

3. It was when he was sleeping between the soldiers; fast asleep: (1.) Not terrified with his danger, though it was very imminent, and there was no visible way for his escape: There was but a step between him and death, and yet he could lay him down in peace, and sleep; sleep in the midst of his enemies, sleep when it may be they were awake; having a good cause that he suffered for, and a good conscience that he suffered with, and being assured that God would issue his trial that way that should be most for his glory, having committed his cause to him that judgeth righteously, his soul dwells at ease; and even in prison, between two soldiers, God gives him sleep, as he doth to his beloved. (2.) Not expecting his deliverance: He did not keep awake looking to the right hand, or to the left, for relief, but lay asleep, and was perfectly surprized with his deliverance. Thus the church, Psalm cxxvi. 1. *We were like them that dream*.

Thirdly, It also magnified his deliverance very much, that an angel was sent from heaven on purpose to rescue him; which made his escape both practicable and warrantable: This angel brought him a legal discharge, and enabled him to make use of it.

1. The angel of the Lord came upon him, *ἐπέστη*, stood over him; he seemed as one abandoned by men, yet not forgotten of his God; the Lord thinketh upon him: Gates and guards keep all his friends from him, but cannot keep the angel of God from him: And they invisibly encamp round about them that fear God, to deliver them, Psalm xxxiv. 7. and therefore they need not fear though an host of enemies encamp against them, Psalm xxvii. 3. Wherever the people of God are, and however surrounded, they have a way open heavenward, nor can any thing intercept their intercourse with God.

2. A light shined in the prison, though it was a dark place, and in the night, Peter shall see his way clear. Some observe, that we do not find in the Old Testament, that, where angels appeared, the light shone round about them; for that was a dark dispensation, and the glory of angels was then veiled; but in the New Testament, when mention is made of the appearing of angels, notice is taken of the light that they appeared in; for it is by the gospel that the upper world is brought to light. The soldiers, to whom Peter was chained, were either struck into a deep sleep for the present, as Saul and his soldiers were when David carried off his spear, and cruse of water, or, if they were awake, the appearance of the angel made them to shake, and to become as dead men, as it was with the guard set on Christ's sepulchre.

3. The angel awaked Peter by giving him a blow on his side, a gentle touch, enough to rouse him out of his sleep, though so fast asleep, that the light that shone upon him did not awake him. When good people slumber in a time of danger, and are not awakened by the light of the word, and the discoveries it gives them, let them expect to be smitten on the side by some sharp affliction; better be raised up so, than left asleep. The language of this stroke was, *Arise up quickly*; not as if the angel feared coming short by his delay, but Peter must not be indulged in it. When David hears the sound of the going on the top of the mulberry trees, then he must rise up quickly, and bestir himself.

4. His chains fell off from his hands. It seems, they had handcuffed him, to make him sure, but God loosed his bands; and if they fall off from his hands, it is as well as if he had the strength of Sampson to break them like threads of tow. Tradition makes a mighty rout about these chains, and tells a formal story, that one of the soldiers kept them for a sacred relique, and they were long after presented to Eudoxia the empress, and I know not what miracles are said to be wrought by them; and the Romish church keeps a feast on the first of August yearly in remembrance of Peter's chains, *Festum vinculorum Petri*, whereas this was at the passover. Surely they are thus fond of Peter's chains, in hopes with them to enslave the world!

5. He was ordered to dress himself presently, and follow the angel and he did so, ver. 8, 9. When Peter was awake, he knew not what to do, but as the angel directed him. 1. He must gird himself; for those that slept in their clothes ungirt themselves, so that they had nothing to do when they got up, but to fasten their girdles. 2. He must bind on his sandals, that he might be fit to walk. Those whose bonds are loosed by the power of divine grace, must have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. 3. He must cast his garments about him, and come away as he was, and followed the angel, and he might go with a great deal of courage and

and cheerfulness, who had a messenger from heaven for his guide and guard; he *went out*, and *followed him*. Those who are delivered out of a spiritual imprisonment, must follow their deliverer, as Israel when they went out of the *house of bondage* did; they went out, not knowing whither they went, but whom they followed.

Now it is said, when Peter went out after the angel, *he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel*, that it was really matter of fact, but *thought he saw a vision*; and if he did, it was not the first that he had seen: But by this it appears that a heavenly vision was so plain, and carried so much of its own evidence along with it, that it was hard to distinguish between what was done in fact, and what was done in vision. *When the Lord brought back the captivity of his people, we were like them that dream*, Psal. cxxvi. 1. Peter was so, he thought the news was too good to be true.

6. He was led safe by the angel out of danger, *ver. 10*. Guards were kept at one pass, and at another, which they were to make their way through, when they were out of the prison, and they did so without any opposition; nay, for ought appears without any discovery; either their eyes were closed, or their hands were tied, or their hearts failed them; so it was, that the angel and Peter safely *pass the first and second ward*. Those watchmen represented the watchmen of the Jewish church, on whom God had *poured out a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear*, Rom. xi. 8. His watchmen are blind, sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. But still there is an iron gate after all, that will stop them, and if the guards can but recover themselves, there they may recover their prisoners, as Pharaoh hoped to re-take Israel at the *red sea*; however, up to that gate they march, and like the *red sea* before Israel it *opened to them*; they did not so much as put a hand to it, but it opened *of its own accord*, by an invisible power; and thus was fulfilled in the letter, what was figuratively promised to Cyrus, *Isa. xlix. 1. I will open before him the two leaved gates, will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron*. And, probably, the iron gate shut again of itself, that none of the guards might pursue Peter. Note, When God will work salvation for his people, no difficulties in their way are insuperable: but even gates of iron are made to open of their own accord. This *iron gate led into the city* out of the castle, or tower; whether within the gates of the city or without, is not certain, so that when they were through this, they were got into the street.

This deliverance of Peter, represents to us our redemption by Christ, which is often spoken of as the *setting of prisoners free*, not only the proclaiming of liberty to the captives, but the *bringing them out of the prison house*. The application of the redemption in the conversion of souls, is the *sending forth of the prisoners, by the blood of the covenant, out of the pit wherein is no water*, Zech. ix. 11. The grace of God, like this angel of the Lord, brings light first into the prison, by the opening of the understanding, smites the sleeping sinner on the side, by the awakening of the conscience; causeth the chains to fall off from the hand, by the renewing of the will; and then gives the word of command, *gird thyself, and follow me*. Difficulties are to be passed through, and the opposition of Satan and his instruments, a *first and second ward, an untoward generation*, from which we are concerned to *save ourselves*; and shall be saved by the grace of God, if we put ourselves under the divine conduct. And at length the iron gate shall be opened to us to enter into the new Jerusalem, where we shall be perfectly freed from all the marks of our captivity, and brought into the *glorious liberty of the children of God*.

7. When this was done, *the angel departed from him*, and left him to himself; he was out of danger from his enemies, and needed no guard; he knew where he was, and how to find out his friend, and needed no guide, and therefore his heavenly guard and guide bids him farewell. Note, Miracles are not to be expected, when ordinary means are to be used. When Peter has now no more wards to pass, or iron gates to get through, he needs only the ordinary invisible ministration of the angels, who encamp round about them that fear God, and deliver them.

Fourthly, Having seen how his deliverance was magnified, we are next to see how it was manifested both to himself and others, and how being made great it was made known. We are here told,

1. How Peter came to himself, and so came himself to the knowledge of it, *ver. 11*. So many strange and surprizing things coming together upon a man just waked out of sleep, put him for the present into some confusion; so that he knew not where he was, nor what he did, nor whether it was fancy or fact; but at length *Peter came to himself*, was thoroughly awake, and found that it was not a dream, but a real thing; *now I know of a surety*, now I know *ἀληθῶς*, truly, now I know that it is truth, and not an *illusion of the fancy*. Now I am well satisfied concerning it, *that the Lord Jesus hath sent his angel*, for angels are subject to him, and go on his errands, and by him *hath delivered me out of the hands of Herod*, who thought he had me fast, and so hath disappointed *all the expectation of the people of the Jews*, who doubted not to see Peter cut off the next day, and hoped it was the one neck of Christianity, in which it would all be struck off at one blow. For which reason it was a cause of great expectation, among not only the common people, but the great people of the Jews. Peter when he recollected himself, *perceived of a truth* what great things God had done for him,

which at first he could not believe for joy. Thus souls who are delivered out of a spiritual bondage, are not at first aware what God has wrought in them; many have the truth of grace, that want the evidence of it: They are questioning, whether there be indeed this change wrought in them, or, whether they have not been all this while in a dream? *But, when the Comforter comes, whom the Father will send*, sooner or later, he will let them know of a surety what a blessed change is wrought in them, and what a happy state they are brought into.

2. How Peter came to his friends, and brought the knowledge of it to them; here is a particular account of this, and it is very entertaining.

1. He *considered the thing*, *ver. 12*. considered how imminent his danger was, how great his deliverance; and now, what has he to do, what improvement must he make of this deliverance? What must he do next? God's providence leaves room for the use of our prudence; and what he has begun, though he has undertaken to perform and perfect it, yet he expects we should *consider the thing*.

2. He went directly to a friend's house, which, it is likely, lay near to the place where he was; it was the house of Mary, a sister of Barnabas, and mother of John Mark, whose house it should seem was frequently made use of for the private meeting of the disciples, either because it was large, and would hold many, or because it lay obscure, or because she was more forward than others were to open her doors to them; and, no doubt it was like the house of *Obededom*, blessed for the ark's sake. A church in the house makes it a little sanctuary.

3. There he found *many* that were *gathered together praying*, at the dead time of the night, praying for Peter, who was the next day to come upon his trial, that God would find out some way or other for his deliverance. Observe, 1. They continued in prayer, in token of their importunity; they did not think it enough once to have presented his case to God, but they did it again and again: Thus *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*. As long as we are kept waiting for a mercy, we must continue praying for it. 2. It should seem that now when the affair came near a crisis, and the very next day was fixed for the determining of it, they were more fervent in prayer than before; and it was a good sign that God intended to deliver Peter, when he thus stirred up a spirit of prayer for his deliverance, for he never *said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain*. 3. They *gathered together* for prayer, on this occasion; though that would make them obnoxious to the government, if they were discovered, yet they know what an encouragement Christ gave to joint prayer, *Mat. xviii. 19, 20*. And it was always the practice of God's praying people, to unite their forces in prayer, as *Ezra. iv. 16*. 2. *Chron. xx. 4*. 4. They were many that were got together for this work, as many, perhaps, as the room would hold; and, first one prayed, and then another of those, who gave themselves to the *word and prayer*, the rest joining with them; or, if they had not ministers among them, no doubt but there were many private Christians that knew how to pray, and to pray pertinently, and to continue long in prayer, when the affections of those who joined, were so stirred as to keep pace with them upon such an occasion. This was in the night when others were asleep, which was an instance both of their prudence and of their zeal. Note, It is good for Christians to have *private meetings* for prayer, especially in times of distress, and not to let fall or forsake such assemblies. 5. Peter came to them when they were thus employed: which was an immediate, present answer to their prayer: It was as if God should say, you are praying that Peter may be restored to you; now, here he is. *While they are yet speaking, I will hear*, *Isa. lxv. 24*. Thus the angel was sent with an answer of peace to Daniel's prayer, *While he was praying*, *Dan. ix. 20. Ask, and it shall be given*.

4. He *knocked at the gate*, and had much ado to get them to let him in, *ver. 13, 14, 15, 16*. Peter *knocked at the door of the gate*, designing by it to awaken them out of their sleep, and for ought appears, not knowing that he disturbed them in their devotions. Yet if his friends were permitted to speak with him in private in the prison, it is possible he might know of this appointment, and this was it which he recollected and considered when he determined to go to that house, where he knew he should find many of his friends together. Now when he knocked there, 1. A *damsel came to hearken*; not to open the door till she knew who was there, a friend or a foe; and what their business was, tearing informers. Whether this damsel was one of the family, or one of the church; whether a servant, or a daughter, doth not appear; it should seem by her being named, that she was of note, among the Christians, and more zealously affected to the better part than most of her age. 2. She knew Peter's voice, having often heard him pray and preach, and discourse, with a great deal of pleasure. But instead of letting him in immediately out of the cold, *she opened not the gate for gladness*. Thus sometimes in a transport of affection to our friends, we do that which is unkind. In an ecstacy of joy, she forgets herself, and *opened not the gate*. 3. She ran in, and, probably, went up to an upper room where they were together, and told them that Peter was certainly at the gate, though she had not courage enough to open the gate, for fear she should be deceived, and it should be the enemy. But when she spoke of Peter's being there, they said, *Then and now*

it is impossible it should be he, for he is in prison. Sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for, we are most backward to believe, because we are afraid of imposing upon ourselves, as the disciples, who, when Christ was risen, *believed not for joy*. However, he stood to it that it was he. Then said they, *It is his angel*, ver. 15.

1. It is a *messenger from him*, that makes use of his name; so some take it, ἀγγελος often signifies no more but a messenger. It is used of John's messengers, *Luke vii. 24, 27.* of Christ's, ix. 32. When the damsel was confident it was Peter, because she knew his voice, they thought it was because he that stood at the door had called himself Peter, and therefore offer this solution of the difficulty, it is one that comes with an errand from him, and thou mistookest, as if it had been he himself. Dr. Hammond thinks this the easiest way of understanding it. 2. It is his *guardian angel*, or some other angel that hath assumed his shape and voice, and stands at the gate in his resemblance; some think, that they supposed his angel to appear as a preface of his death approaching; and this agrees with a notion which the vulgar have, that sometimes before persons have died *their ward has been seen*, i. e. some spirit exactly in their likeness for countenance and dress, when they themselves have been at the same time in some other place; they call it their ward, i. e. their angel that is their guard. If so, they concluded this an ill omen, that their prayers were denied, and that the language of the apparition was, let it suffice you, Peter must die, say no more of that matter. And if we understand it so, it only proves, that they had then such an opinion of a man's ward being seen a little before his death, but doth not prove that there is such a thing. Others think, they took this to be an angel from heaven sent to bring them a grant to their prayers. But why should they imagine that angel to assume the voice and shape of Peter, when we find not any thing like it in the appearance of angels? Perhaps, they did herein speak the language of the Jews, who had a fond conceit, that every good man hath a particular tutelar angel that *has the charge* of him, and sometimes personates him. The heathen called it a *good genius* that attended a man; but since no other scripture speaks of such a thing, this alone is too weak to bear the weight of such a doctrine. We are sure that the angels are *ministering spirits* for the good of the heirs of salvation, that they have a *charge concerning them*, and *pitch their tents round about them*; and we need not be solicitous that every particular saint should have his *guardian angel*, when we are assured he has a *guard of angels*.

5. At length they let him in, ver. 16. *He continued knocking*, though they delayed to open to him, and at last they admitted him. The iron gate which opposed his enlargement, opened of itself, without so much as once knocking at it; but the door of his friend's house that was to welcome him, doth not open of its own accord, but must be knocked at, long knocked at, lest Peter should be puffed up by the honours which the angel did him, he meets with this mortification, by a seeming slight which his friends put upon him. But *when they saw him, they were astonished*, were filled with wonder and joy in him, as much as they were but just now with sorrow and fear concerning him. It was both surprizing and pleasing to them in the highest degree.

6. Peter gave them an account of his deliverance; when he came to the company that were gathered together with so much zeal to pray for him, they gathered about him with no less zeal to congratulate his deliverance, and herein they were so noisy, that when Peter himself begged them to consider what peril he was yet in, if they should be *overheard*, he could not make them hear him, but was forced to *beckon to them with the hand to hold their peace*, and had much ado thereby to command silence, while *he declared unto them how the Lord Jesus had by an angel brought him out of prison*; and it is very likely having found them *praying* for his deliverance, he did not part with them till he and they had together solemnly given thanks to God for his enlargement; or if he could not stay to do it, it is likely they stayed together to do it; for what is *won by prayer*, must be *worn with praise*; and God must always have the glory of that which we have the comfort of. When David declares *what God had done for his soul*, he blesteth God, who had not turned away his prayer, *Psal. lvi. 16, 20.*

7. Peter sent the account to others of his friends; *Go, shew these things to James, and to the brethren with him*; who perhaps, were met together in another place at the same time, upon the same errand to the throne of grace, which is one way of keeping up the communion of saints, and wrestling with God in prayer, acting in concert, though at a distance; like Esther and Mordecai. He would have James and his company to know of his deliverance, not only that they might be *eased of their pain*, and delivered from their fears concerning Peter, but that they might *return thanks* to God with him, and for him. Observe, though Herod had slain one James with the sword, yet here was another James, and that in Jerusalem too, that stood up in his room to preside among the *brethren* there; for when God has work to do, he will never want instruments to do it with.

8. Peter had nothing more to do for the present, but to shift for his own safety, which he did accordingly. *He departed, and went into another place more obscure*, and therefore more secure. He knew the town very well, and knew where to find a place that would be a shelter to him. Note, Even the Christian law of *self-denial and suffering for Christ*, has not abrogated and repealed the natural

law of *self-preservation*, and *care for own safety*, as far as God gives an opportunity of providing for it by lawful means.

Fifthly, Having seen the triumph of Peter's friends in his deliverance: Let us next observe the confusion of his enemies thereupon, which was so much the greater because peoples expectation was so much raised of the putting of him to death.

1. The guards were in the utmost consternation upon it, for they knew how highly penal it was to them to let a prisoner escape that they had charge of, ver. 18. *As soon as it was day*, and they found their prisoner gone, there was *no small stir*, or *strife*, as some read it; *among the soldiers, what was become of Peter*; he is gone, and no body knows how, or which way. They thought themselves as sure as could be of him but last night, yet now the bird is flown, and they can hear no tale or tidings of him. This set them together by the ears; one saith, it was long of you; the other, nay, but it was long of you; having no other way to clear themselves, but by accusing one another. With us, if but a prisoner for debt escape, the sheriff must answer for the debt. Thus have the persecutors of the gospel of Christ, been often filled with vexation to see its cause conquering, notwithstanding the opposition they have given to it.

2. Houses were searched in vain for the rescued prisoner, ver. 19. *Herod sought for him, and found him not*. Who can find whom God hath hid? Baruch and Jeremiah are safe, though *sought for*: because *the Lord has hid them*, Jer. xxxvi. 26. In times of public danger, all believers have God for *their hiding place*; which is such a secret, that there the ignorant world cannot find them; such a strength, that the impotent world cannot reach them.

3. The keepers were reckoned with for a permissive escape; *Herod examined the keepers*, and finding that they could give no satisfactory account, how Peter got away, *he commanded that they should be put to death*; according to the Roman law, and that, 1 Kings xx. 39. *If by any means he be missing, then shall thy life go for his life*. It is probable, these keepers had been more severe with Peter than they needed to be, as the jaylor, Acts xvi. 29. and had been abusive to him, and to others, that had been his prisoners upon the like account, and now justly are they put to death, for that which was not their fault, and by him too that had set them to work to *vex the church*. When the wicked are thus snared in the work of their own hands, the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth. Or, if they had not thus made themselves obnoxious to the justice of God, and it be thought hard that innocent men should suffer thus for that which was purely the act of God, we may easily admit the conjectures of some, that though they were *commanded to be put to death*, to please the Jews, who were sadly disappointed by Peter's escape, yet they were not executed; but Herod's death immediately after prevented it.

4. Herod himself retired upon it; *he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode*. He was vexed to the heart, as a lion disappointed of his prey; and the more because he had so much raised the *expectation of the people of the Jews*, concerning Peter, had told them how he would very shortly gratify them with the sight of Peter's head in a charger, which would oblige them as much as John baptist's did Herodias; it made him ashamed to be robbed of this boasting, and to see himself, notwithstanding his confidence, disabled to make his words good. This is such a mortification to his proud spirit, that he cannot bear to stay in Judea, but away he goes to Cesarea. Josephus mentions this coming of Herod to Cesarea, at the end of the third year of his reign over all Judea, *Antiq. xix. 7.* and saith, he came thither to solemnize the plays that were kept there, by a vast concourse of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom, for the health of Cesar, and in honour of him.

20. ¶ And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the kings chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the kings country. 21. And upon a set day, Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22. And the people gave a shout, saying, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*. 23. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. 24. ¶ But the word of God grew and multiplied. 25. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their ministry*, and took with them John whose surname was Mark.

In these verses we have,

First, The death of Herod: God reckoned with him, not only for his putting James to death, but for his design and endeavour to put Peter to death; for sinners will be called to an account, not only for the wickedness of their deeds, but for the *wickedness of their endeavours*, *Psal. xxviii. 4.* For the mischief they have done, and the mischief they would have done. It was but a little while that Herod lived after this: Some sinners God makes quick work with. Observe,

1. How the measure of his iniquity was filled up ; it was pride that did it ; that is it that commonly goes more immediately *before destruction*, and a *haughty spirit before a fall*. Nebuchadnezzar had been a very bloody man, and a great persecutor ; but the word that was in the king's mouth when the judgments of God fell upon him, was a *proud word*, *is not this great Babylon that I have built ?* Dan. iv. 30, 31. It is the glory of God to *look on every one that is proud, and bring him low*, Job xl. 12. The instance of it here is very remarkable, and shews how God *resists the proud*.

1. The men of Tyre and Sidon had, it seems, offended Herod ; those cities were now under the Roman yoke, and some misdemeanors they had been guilty of, which Herod highly resented, and was resolved they should feel his resentments. Some very small matter would serve such a proud imperious man as Herod was for a provocation, where he was minded to pick a quarrel. He was *highly displeased* with this people, and they must be made to know that his wrath was as the *roaring of a lion, as messengers of death*.

2. The offenders truckled, being convinced, if not that they had done amiss, yet that it was in vain to contend with such a potent adversary, that, right or wrong, would be too hard for them ; they submitted, and were willing upon any terms to *make peace with him*. Observe, 1. The reason why they were desirous to have the matter accommodated ; *because their country was nourished by the king's country*. Tyre and Sidon were trading cities, and had little land belonging to them, but were always supplied with corn from the land of Canaan, *Judah and Israel traded in their markets wheat, and honey, and oil*, Ezek. xxvii. 17. Now if Herod should make a law to prohibit the exportation of corn to Tyre and Sidon, (which they knew not but a man so revengeful as he might soon do, not caring how many were famished by it) their country would be undone ; so that it was their interest to keep in with him. And is it not then our wisdom to *make our peace with God*, and humble ourselves before him, who have a much more constant and necessary dependence upon him, than one country can have upon another ; for *in him we live, and move, and have our being ?* 2. The method they took to prevent a rupture ; *they made Blastus the King's chamberlain their friend* ; it is very likely with bribes, and good presents ; that is usually the way for men to make courtiers their friends. And it is the hard fate of princes that they must have not only their affairs, but their affections too, governed by such mercenary tools : yet such men as Herod, that will not be governed by reason, had better be so governed, than by pride and passion. Blastus had Herod's ear, and has the art of mollifying his resentments ; and a time is fixed for the ambassadors of Tyre and Sidon to come and make a publick submission to beg his majesty's pardon, throw themselves upon his clemency, and promise never again to offend in the like kind ; and that which will thus *feed his pride*, shall serve to *cool his passion*.

3. Herod appeared in all the pomp and grandeur he had ; he was *arrayed in his royal apparel*, ver. 21. *and sat upon his throne*. Josephus gives an account of this splendid appearance which Herod made upon this occasion, *Antiq.* xix. 7. He saith, that Herod at this time wore a robe of cloth of silver, so richly woven, and framed with such art, that when the sun shone it reflected the light with such a lustre as dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and struck an awe upon them. Foolish people value men by their outward appearance ; and no better are they who value themselves by the esteem of such, who court it and recommend themselves to it, as Herod did, who thought to make up the want of a royal heart, with his *real apparel* ; *and sat upon his throne*, as if that gave him a privilege to trample upon all about him as *his footstool*.

4. He made a speech to the men of Tyre and Sidon, a fine oration, in which, probably, after he had aggravated their fault, and commended their submission, he concluded with an assurance that he would pass by their offence, and receive them into his favour again, proud enough that he had it in his power, *whom he would to keep alive*, as well as *whom he would to slay* ; and, probably, kept them in suspense what their doom should be, till he made this oration to them, that the act of grace might come to them with the more pleasing surprize.

5. The people applauded him ; the people that had a dependence upon him, and had benefit by his favour, they *gave a shout*, and this was it they shouted, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*, ver. 22. God is great and good, and they thought such was Herod's greatness in his apparel and throne, and such his goodness in forgiving them, that he was worthy to be called no less than a God ; and, perhaps, his speech was delivered with such an air of majesty, and a mixture of clemency with it, as affected the auditors thus. Or, it may be, it was not from any real impression made upon their minds, or any high or good thoughts they had indeed conceived of him, but how meanly soever they thought of him, they were resolved thus to curry favour with him, and strengthen the new made peace between him and them. Thus great men are made an easy prey to flatterers, if they lend an ear to them, and encourage them. Grotius here observes that though magistrates are called gods, *Psal.* lxxxii. 1. yet kings or monarchs, that is, single persons are not, lest countenance should thereby be given to the Gentiles, who gave divine honours to their kings alive, and dead, as here ; but they are a college of senators, or a bench of judges that are called

gods ; *In collegio toto senatorum non idem erat periculi, itaque eos non autem reges invenimus dictos elohim*. Those that live by sense vilify God, as if he were altogether *such a one as themselves* ; and deify men, as if they were gods ; having *their persons in admiration, because of advantage*. This is not only a great affront to God, giving that glory to others, which is due to him alone, but a great injury to those who are thus flattered, as it makes them forget themselves, and so puffs them up with pride as that they are in the utmost danger possible of falling into the condemnation of the devil.

6. These undue praises he took to himself, pleased himself with them, and prided himself in them ; and that was his sin. We do not find that he had given any private orders to his confidants to begin such a shout, or to put those words into the mouths of the people, or that he returned them thanks for the compliment, and undertook to answer their opinion of him : But his fault was, that he said nothing, did not rebuke their flattery, nor disown the title they had given him, nor *give God the glory*, ver. 23. But he took it to himself, was very willing it should terminate in himself, and that he should be thought a god, and have divine honours paid him. *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*. And it was worse in him who was a Jew, and professed to believe one God only, than it was in the heathen emperors, who had gods many, and lords many.

2. Observe, How his iniquity was punished ; immediately, ver. 23. *the angel of the Lord smote him*, (by the order of Christ, for to him all judgment is committed) *because he gave not God the glory* ; for God is jealous for his own honour, and will be glorified upon those whom he is not glorified by) and *he was eaten of worms*, above ground, *and gave up the Ghost*. Now he was reckoned with for vexing the church of Christ, killing James, and imprisoning of Peter, and all the other mischiefs he had done. Observe in the destruction of Herod,

1. It was *no less than an angel* that was the *agent* ; *the angel of the Lord*, that angel that was ordered and commissioned to do it, or that angel that used to be employed in works of this nature, the destroying angel : Or, the angel, i. e. that angel that delivered Peter in the former part of the chapter, that angel smote Herod. For those ministering spirits are the ministers either of divine justice, or of divine mercy, as God is pleased to employ them. The angel smote him with a sore disease just at that instant when he was strutting at the applauses of the people, and adoring his own shadow. Thus the king of Tyre said in his pride, *I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, and set his heart as the heart of God* ; but he shall be *a man, and no God*, a weak mortal man, *in the hand of him that slayeth him*, Ezek. xxviii. 2, 9. so Herod here. Potent princes must know, not only that God is omnipotent, but that angels too are greater in power and might than they. The angel *smote him, because he gave not the glory to God* ; angels are jealous for God's honour, and as soon as ever they have commission, are ready to smite those that usurp his prerogatives, and rob God of his honour.

2. It was *no more than a worm* that was the instrument of Herod's destruction ; he was *eaten of worms*, *γενόμενος σκώληκος*, *he became worm eaten*, so it must be read ; rotten he was, and he became like a piece of rotten wood. The body in the grave is destroyed by worms ; but Herod's body putrefied while he was yet alive, and bred the worms which began to feed upon it betimes ; so Antiochus, that great persecutor died. See here, 1. What *vile bodies* those are which we carry about with us, they carry about with them the seeds of their own dissolution, by which they will soon be destroyed whenever God doth but speak the word. Surprising discoveries have of late been made by microscopes of the multitude of worms that there are in human bodies, and how much they contribute to the diseases of them ; which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our bodies, or of any of their accomplishments ; and why we should not pamper our bodies, for that is but feeding the worms, and feeding them for the worms. 2. See what weak and contemptible creatures God can make the instruments of his justice, when he pleaseth. Pharaoh is plagued with *lice and flies*, Ephraim consumed as with a *moth*, and Herod eaten of *worms*. 3. See how God delights not only to bring down proud men, but to bring them down in such a way as is most mortifying, and pours most contempt upon them. Herod is not only destroyed, but destroyed by *worms*, that the pride of his glory may be effectually stained.

This story of the death of Herod, is particularly related by Josephus, a Jew, *Antiq. lib.* xix. *cap.* vii. thus ; “ That Herod came down to Cesarea to celebrate a festival in honour of Cesar ; that the second day of the festival, he went in the morning to the theatre, clothed with that splendid robe mentioned before ; that his flatterers saluted him as a god, begged that he would be propitious to them ; that hitherto they had revered him as a man, but now they would confess to be in him something more excellent than a mortal nature. That he did not refuse or correct this impious flattery ; (so the historian expreth it) but presently after looking up he saw an owl perched over his head, and was at the same instant seized with a most violent pain in his bowels, and gripes in his belly, which were exquisite from the very first ; that he turned his eyes upon his friends, and said to this purpose ; now I, whom you called a god, and therefore immortal, must be proved a man, and mortal. That his torture

" continued without intermission, or the least abatement, and then
 " he died in the fifty fourth year of his age, when he had been
 " king seven years".

Secondly, The progress of the gospel after this:

1. The word of God grew and multiplied; as seed sown, which comes up with a great increase, thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold; wherever the gospel was preached multitudes embraced it, and were added to the church by it, *ver.* 24. After the death of James, the word of God grew; for the church, the more it was afflicted, the more it multiplied; like Israel in Egypt. The courage and comfort of the martyrs, and God's owning them, did more to invite them to Christianity, than their sufferings did to deter them from it. After the death of Herod, the word of God got ground: When such a persecutor was taken off by a dreadful judgment, many were thereby convinced that the cause of Christianity, was doubtless the cause of Christ; and therefore embraced it.

2. Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch as soon as they had dispatched the business they were sent upon; when they had fulfilled their ministry, had paid in their money to the proper persons, and taken care about the due distribution of it to those for whom it was collected, they returned from Jerusalem. Though they had a great many friends there, yet at present their work lay at Antioch; and where our business is, there we should be; and no longer from it than is requisite. When a minister is called abroad, upon any service, when he has fulfilled that ministry, he ought to remember that he has work to do at home, which wants him there and calls him thither. Barnabas and Saul, when they went to Antioch, took with them John, whose surname was Mark, at whose mother's house they had that meeting for prayer, which we read of, *ver.* 12. She was sister to Barnabas; it is probable, Barnabas lodged there, and, perhaps, Paul with him, while they were at Jerusalem, and that was it that occasioned the meeting there at that time; for wherever Paul was, he would have some good work a doing; and their intimacy in that family while they were at Jerusalem, occasioned their taking a son of that family with them, when they returned, to be trained up under them and employed by them in the service of the gospel. Educating young men for the ministry, and entring them into it, is a very good work for elder ministers to take care of and of good service to the rising generation.

C H A P. XIII.

We have not yet met with anything concerning the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles, which bears any proportion to the largeness of that commission, Go, and disciple all nations. The door was opened in the baptizing of Cornelius and his friends; but since then, we had the gospel preached to the Jews only, chap. xi. 19. It should seem as if the light which began to shine upon the Gentile world had withdrawn itself. But here in this chapter, that work, that great good work, is renewed in the midst of the years; and though the Jews shall still have the first offer of the gospel made to them, yet upon their refusal, the Gentiles shall have their share of the offer of it. Here is (1.) The solemn ordination of Barnabas and Saul, by divine direction, to the ministry, to the great work of spreading the gospel among the nations about; and it is probable, other apostles or ordained men, dispersed themselves by order from Christ, upon the same errand, *ver.* 1.—3. (2.) Their preaching the gospel in Cyprus, and the opposition they met with there from Elymas the sorcerer, *ver.* 4.—13. (3.) The heads of a sermon which Paul preached to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, in their synagogue, which is given us as a specimen of what they usually preached to the Jews, and the method they took with them, *ver.* 14.—41. (4.) The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles at their request, and upon the Jews refusal of it, wherein the apostles justified themselves against the disputes which the Jews conceived at it, and God owned them, *ver.* 42.—50. (5.) The trouble which the infidel Jews gave to the apostles, which changed them to remove to another place, *ver.* 50.—52. It is that the design of this chapter is to shew how cautiously, how gradually, and with what good reason the apostles carried the gospel into the Gentile world, and admitted the Gentiles into the church which was so great an offence to the Jews, and which Paul is so much intent to justify in his epistles.

NOW there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. 3. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

We have here a divine warrant and commission to Barnabas and Saul to go and preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and their ordination to that service by the imposition of hands with fasting and prayer.

First, There is an account of the present state of the church at Antioch, which was planted, chap. xii. 26.

1. How well furnished it was with good ministers; there were there certain prophets and teachers, *ver.* 1. Men that were eminent for gifts, graces, and usefulness. Christ, when he ascended on high, gave some prophets, and some teachers, *Eph.* iv. 11. these were both. Agabus seems to have been a prophet, and not a teacher, and there were many who were teachers, that were not prophets, but those were at times divinely inspired, and had instructions immediately from heaven upon special occasions, which gave them the title of prophets; and withal they were stated teachers of the church in their religious assemblies, expounded the scriptures, and opened the doctrine of Christ with suitable applications. These were the prophets, and scribes, or teachers, which Christ promised to send, *Mat.* xxiii. 34. such as were every way qualified for the service of the Christian church. Antioch was a great city, and the Christians there were many, so that they could not all meet in one place, it was therefore requisite they should have many teachers, to preside in their respective assemblies, and to deliver God's mind to them. Barnabas is first named, probably because he was the eldest, and Saul last, probably because he was the youngest, but afterwards the last became first, and Saul more eminent in the church.

Three other are mentioned. 1. Simeon, or Simon, that, for distinction sake, was called Niger; Simon the black, from the colour of his hair, like him that with us was surnamed the black prince. 2. Lucius of Cyrene, who some think (and Dr. Lightfoot inclines to it) was the same with this Luke that wrote the Acts; originally a Cyrenian, and educated in the Cyrenian college, or synagogue at Jerusalem, and there first receiving the gospel. 3. Manaen, a person of some quality, as it should seem, for he was brought up with Herod the tetrarch, either nursed of the same milk, or bred at the same school, or, pupil to the same tutor, or rather, one that was his constant colleague, and companion, that in every part of his education was his comrade and intimate, which gave him a fair prospect of preferment at court, and yet for Christ's sake he quitted all the hopes of it. Like Moses, who when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Had he joined in with Herod, with whom he was brought up, he might have had Blastus's place, and have been his chamberlain, but it is better to be fellow-sufferer with a saint, than fellow-persecutor with a tetrarch.

2. How well employed they were, *ver.* 2. They ministered to the Lord and fasted. Observe, 1. Diligent faithful teachers do truly minister unto the Lord. They that instruct Christians serve Christ, they really do him honours, and carry on the interest of his kingdom. They that minister to the church in praying and preaching (both which are included here) minister unto the Lord, for they are the church's servants for Christ's sake, to him they must have an eye in their ministrations, and from him they shall have their recompence. 2. Ministering unto the Lord in one way or other, ought to be the stated business of churches and their teachers; to this work time ought to be set apart, nay, it is set apart, and in this work we ought to spend some part of every day. What have we to do as Christians and ministers but to serve the Lord Christ, *Col.* iii. 24. *Rom.* xiv. 18. 3. Religious fasting is of use in our ministering to the Lord, both as a sign of our humiliation, and a means of our mortification. Though it was not much practised by the disciples of Christ, while the bridegroom was with them, as it was by the disciples of John, and of the Pharisees, yet after the bridegroom was taken away they abounded in it, as those that had well learned to deny themselves, and to endure hardness.

Secondly, The orders given by the holy Ghost for the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul, while they were engaged in publick exercises, the ministers of the several congregations in the city joining in one solemn fast, or day of prayer, the holy Ghost said, either by a voice from heaven, or by a strong impulse on the minds of those of them that were prophets, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. He did not specify the work, but refers to a former call, which they themselves knew the meaning of, whether others did or no; as for Saul he was particularly told that he must bear Christ's name to the Gentiles, *Acts* ix. 15. that he must be sent to the Gentiles, *Acts* xxii. 20. the matter was settled between them at Jerusalem, before this, that as Peter, James, and John laid out themselves among them of the circumcision, so Paul and Barnabas should go to the heathen, *Gal.* ii. 7, 8, 9. Barnabas, it is likely, knew himself designed for that service as well as Paul. Yet they would not thrust themselves into this harvest, though it appeared plenteous, till they received their orders from the Lord of the harvest, thrust in thy sickle for the harvest is ripe, *Rev.* xiv. 15. The orders were, separate me Barnabas and Saul. Observe here,

1. Christ by his Spirit has the nomination of his ministers, for it is by the Spirit of Christ that they are both qualified in some measure for his service, inclined to it, and taken off from other cares inconsistent with it. There are some whom the holy Ghost hath separated for the service of Christ, hath distinguished from others as men that are offered, and that willingly offer themselves to the temple service, and concerning them directions are given to those who are competent judges of the sufficiency of the abilities, and the sincerity of the inclination, separate them.

2. Christ's ministers are separated to him, and to the holy Ghost; separate them to me; they are to be employed in Christ's work, and under the Spirit's conduct, to the glory of God the Father.

3. All that are separated to Christ as his ministers, are separated to work; Christ keeps no servants to be idle: *If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work*, that is it which he is separated to, to labour in the word and doctrine: They are separated to take pains, not to take state.

4. The work of Christ's ministers, to which they are to be separated, is work that is already settled, and that which all Christ's ministers hitherto have been called to, and which they themselves have first been, by an external call, directed to, and have chosen.

Thirdly, Their ordination, pursuant to these orders, not to the ministry in general, Barnabas and Saul had both of them been ministers long before this, but to a particular service in the ministry, which had something peculiar in it, and which required a fresh commission; which commission God saw fit, at this time, to transmit by the hands of *these prophets and teachers*, for the giving of this direction to the church, that *teachers* should ordain *teachers* (for *prophets* we are not now any longer to expect) and that those who have the dispensing of the oracles of Christ committed to them, should, for the benefit of posterity, commit the same to faithful men, which shall be able also to teach others, 2 Tim. ii. 7. So here, Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, faithful teachers at this time in the church of Antioch, when they had fasted and prayed, laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them away, ver. 3. according to the directions received. Observe,

1. They prayed for them: When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for, especially by their brethren, that are their fellow-labourers, and fellow-soldiers.

2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in other their ministrations, ver. 3. Christ has taught us this by his abstaining from sleep (a night fast, if I may so call it) the night before he sent forth his apostles, that he might spend it in prayer.

3. They laid their hands on them. Hereby, 1. They gave them their manumission, dismissal, or discharge from the present service they were engaged in, in the church of Antioch, acknowledging not only that they went off fairly, and with consent, but honourably, and with a good report. 2. They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, begged that God would be with them, and give them success; and, in order to this, that they might be filled with the holy Ghost in their work. This very thing is explained, chap. xiv. 26. where it is said, concerning Paul and Barnabas, that from Antioch they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. As it was an instance of the humility of Barnabas and Saul, that they submitted to the imposition of the hands of those that were their equals, or rather their inferiors; so it was of the good disposition of the other teachers, that they did not envy Barnabas and Saul the honour to which they were preferred, but cheerfully committed it to them, with hearty prayers for them; and they sent them away with all expedition, out of a concern for those countries where they were to break up fallow ground.

4. ¶ So they being sent forth by the holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. 6. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain forcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: 7. Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8. But Elymas the forcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. 9. Then Saul (who also is called Paul) filled with the holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 11. And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. 12. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. 13. Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

In these verses we have,

First, A general account of the coming of Barnabas and Saul to the famous island of Cyprus, and, perhaps, thitherward they steered their course, because Barnabas was a native of that country, chap. iv. 36. and he was willing they should have the first-fruits of his labours, pursuant to his new commission. Observe,

1. Their being sent forth by the holy Ghost was one great thing that encouraged them in this undertaking, ver. 4. If the holy Ghost send them forth, he will go along with them, strengthen them, carry them on in their work, and give them success, and then they fear no colours, but can cheerfully venture upon a stormy sea from Antioch, which was now to them a quiet harbor.

2. They came to Seleucia, the sea-port town opposite to Cyprus, from thence crossed the sea to Cyprus, and, in that island, the first city they came to was Salamis, a city on the east-side of the island, ver. 5. and when they had sown good seed there, thence they went onward through the isle, ver. 6. till they came to Paphos, which lay on the western coast.

3. They preached the word of God, wherever they came, in the synagogues of the Jews; so far were they from excluding them, that they gave them the preference! and so left those among them, who believed not, inexcusable; they would have gathered them, but they would not: They did not act clandestinely, nor preach the Messiah to others unknown to them, but laid their doctrine open to the censure of the rulers of their synagogues, who might, if they had any thing to say, object against it: Nor would they have acted separately, but in concert with them, if they had not driven them out from them, and from their synagogues.

4. They had John to their minister; not their servant in common things, but their assistant in the things of God; either to prepare their way in places where they designed to come, or to carry on their work in places where they had begun it, or to converse familiarly with those to whom they preached publicly, and explain things to them, and such a one might be many ways of use to them, especially in a strange country.

Secondly, A particular account of their encounter with Elymas the forcerer, whom they met with at Paphos, where the governor resided; a place famous for a temple built to Venus, there was one called Paphia Venus; and therefore there was in it the image of the goddess, and need that the Son of God should be manifested, to destroy the works of the devil.

1. There the deputy, a Gentile, Sergius Paulus by name, encouraged the apostles, and was willing to hear their message. He was governor of the country, under the Roman emperor, consul, or proprietor, such a one as we would call lord lieutenant the island; he had the character of a prudent man, an unpartial and considerate man, that was ruled by reason, not passion or prejudice; which appeared by this, that, having a character of Barnabas and Saul, he sent for them, and desired to hear the word of God. Note, That which we hear has a tendency to lead us to God, it is prudence to desire to hear more of it. These are wise people, however they may be ranked among the foolish of this world, who are inquisitive after the mind and will of God. Though he was a great man, and a man in authority, and the preachers of the gospel were men that made no figure, yet if they have a message from God, let him know what it is, and, if it appear to be so, he is ready to receive it.

2. There Elymas, a Jew, a forcerer, opposed them, and did all he could to obstruct their progress: This justified the apostles in turning to the Gentiles, that this Jew was so malignant against them.

(1.) This Elymas was a pretender to the gift of prophecy, a forcerer, a false prophet; one that would be taken for a divine, because he was skilled in the arts of divination; was a conjurer, and took on him to tell people their fortune, and to discover things lost, and, probably, was in league with the devil for that purpose; his name was Barjesus, the son of Jeshua; it signifies the son of salvation; but the Syriack calls him, Bar-Sabna, the son of pride; filius inflationis.

(2.) He was hanging on at court, was with the deputy of the country; it doth not appear that the deputy called for him, but he thrust himself upon him, being, no doubt, to make a hand of him, and get more of him.

(3.) He made it his business to withstand Barnabas and Saul, the magicians of Egypt, in Pharaoh's court, who sought to kill Aaron, 2 Tim. iii. 8. He set up himself to be a messenger from heaven, and denied that they were: And thus he sought to turn away the deputy from the faith, ver. 8. to keep him from receiving the gospel, which he saw him inclined to do. Note, That in a special manner busy with great men, and men in power, to keep them from being religious, because he knows their example, whether good or bad, will have an influence upon many; and those who are any way instrumental to spread of people against the truths and ways of Christ, are doing the devil's work.

(4.) Saul (who is here, the first time, called Paul, and never after Saul) fell upon him for this with a holy indignation. Saul was his name as he was a Hebrew, and of the tribe of Benjamin, Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome; hitherto we have had him mostly conversant among the Jews, and therefore called by his Jewish name; but now when he is sent forth among the Gentiles, he is called by his Roman name, to put somewhat of a reputation upon him in the Roman cities; Paulus being a very common name among them. But, some think, he was never called Paul till now, that he was instrumental in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to the faith of Christ, and that he took that name (Paulus) as a memorial of that

victory obtained by the gospel of Christ, as among the Romans he that had conquered a country took his denomination from it, as *Germanicus, Britannicus, Africanus*; or rather, *Sergius Paulus* himself gave him the name *Paulus* in token of his favour and respect to him, as Vespasian gave him his name *Flavius*, to Josephus the Jew. Now of Paul it is said,

1. That he was *filled with the holy Ghost* upon this occasion, *filled with a holy zeal* against a professed enemy of Christ, which was one of the graces of *the holy Ghost, a spirit of burning*; *filled with a power to denounce the wrath of God* against him, which was one of *the gifts of the holy Ghost, a spirit of judgment*: He felt a more than ordinary fervor in his mind, as the prophet did when he was *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord*, Micah iii. 8. and another prophet when his *face was made harder than flint*, Ezek. iii. 9. and another when his *mouth was made like a sharp sword*, Isa. xlix. 2. What Paul said did not come from any personal resentment, but from the strong impressions which *the holy Ghost* made upon his spirit.

2. He *set his eyes upon him*, to face him down, and to shew a holy boldness, in opposition to his wicked impudence. He *set his eyes upon him*, as an indication that the eye of the heart-searching God was upon him, and saw through and through him; nay, *that the face of the Lord was against him*, Psalm xxxiv. 16. He fixed his eyes upon him, to see if he could discern in his countenance any marks of remorse for what he had done, which if he could have discerned the least sign of, it had prevented the ensuing doom.

3. He gave him his true character, not in passion, but by *the holy Ghost*, who knows men better than they know themselves, ver. 1. He describes him to be,

(1.) An agent for hell; and such there have been upon this earth (the seat of the war between *the seed of the woman, and of the serpent*) ever since *Cain, who was of that wicked one*, an incarnate devil, *slaw his brother*, for no other reason, but because *his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*. This *Elymas*, though called *Barjesus*, a son of *Jesus*, was really a *child of the devil*, bore his image, did his lusts, and served his interests, John viii. 44. In two things he resembled *the devil*, as a child doth his father: 1. In craft; *the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field*, Gen. iii. 1. and *Elymas*, though void of all wisdom, yet was *full of subtilty*, expert in all the arts of deceiving men, and imposing upon them. 2. In malice; he was *full of all mischief*; a spiteful, ill-conditioned man; and a sworn implacable enemy to God, and goodness. Note, A fulness of *subtilty and mischief* together, make a man indeed a *child of the devil*.

(2.) An adversary to heaven; if he be a *child of the devil*, it follows of course that he is an *enemy to all righteousness*, for *the devil* is so. Note, Those that are enemies to the doctrine of Christ, are *enemies to all righteousness*, for in it all *righteousness* is summed up, and fulfilled.

4. He charged upon him his present crime, and expostulated with him upon it; *wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* i. e. to misrepresent them, to put false colours upon them, and so to discourage people from entering into them, and walking in them. Note, 1. *The ways of the Lord are right*, they are all so, they are perfectly so. *The ways of the Lord Jesus are right*, the only right ways to heaven and happiness. 2. There are those who *pervert these right ways*, who not only wander out of these ways themselves, as *Elihu's* penitent, who owns, *I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not*, but mislead others, and suggest to them unjust prejudices against these ways, as if the doctrine of Christ were uncertain and precarious, the laws of Christ unreasonable and impracticable, and the service of Christ unpleasant and unprofitable; which is an unjust *perverting of the right ways of the Lord*, and making them to seem crooked ways.

3. Those that *pervert the right ways of the Lord*, are commonly so hardened in it, that though the equity of those ways be set before them by the most powerful and commanding evidence, yet they *will not cease to do it*; *est iustus non persuaseris*; they will have it their own way, *have loved strangers, and after them they will go*.

5. He denounced the judgment of God upon him, in a present blindness, ver. 11. *And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee*, a righteous hand; God is now about to lay hands on thee, and make thee his prisoner, for thou art taken in arms against him; *thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season*. This was designed both for the proof of his crime, as it was a miracle wrought to confirm *the right ways of the Lord*, and, consequently, to shew the wickedness of him who would not cease to *pervert them*; as also for the punishment of his crime: It was a suitable punishment; he *shut his eyes*, the eyes of his mind, against *the light of the gospel*, and therefore justly were *the eyes of his body shut against the light of the sun*; he sought to blind *the deputy*, as an agent for *the god of this world, who blindeth the mind of them that believe not*, 1st *the light of the gospel should shine unto them*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. and therefore is himself struck blind; yet it was a moderate punishment, he was only struck *blind*, when he might most justly have been struck dead; and that it was only *for a season*; if he will repent, and give glory to God, by making confession, his sight shall be restored; nay, it should seem, though he do not,

yet his sight shall be restored, to try if he will be led to repentance, either by the judgments of God, or by his mercies.

6. This judgment was immediately executed: *There fell on him a mist and a darkness*, as on the Sodomites, when they persecuted Lot; and on the Syrians, when they persecuted Elisha; this silenced him presently, filled him with confusion, and was an effectual confutation of all he said against the doctrine of Christ: Let not him any more pretend to be a guide to *the deputy's* conscience, who is himself struck blind: It was also an earnest to him of a *much sorer punishment* if he repent not, for he is one of those *wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, Jude 13. *Elymas* did himself proclaim the truth of the miracle, when he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand; and where now is all his skill in forcery, upon which he had so much valued himself, when he can neither find his way himself, nor find a friend that will be so kind as to lead him!

3. Notwithstanding all the endeavours of *Elymas* to turn away *the deputy from the faith*, he was brought to believe, and this miracle, wrought upon the magician himself (like *the boils of Egypt, which were upon the magicians, so that they could not stand before Moses*, Exod. ix. 11.) contributed to it. *The deputy* was a very sensible man, and observed something uncommon, and which spoke its divine original.

(1.) In Paul's preaching; he was astonished at *the doctrine of the Lord, the Lord Christ, the doctrine* that is from him, the discoveries he has made of the Father, *the doctrine* that is concerning him, his person, natures, offices, undertaking. Note, *The doctrine of Christ* has a great deal in it that is astonishing, and the more we know of it, the more reason we shall see to wonder, and stand amazed at it.

(2.) In this miracle; when he saw what was done, and how much Paul's power transcended that of the magician, and how plainly *Elymas* was baffled and confounded, he believed: It is not said that he was baptized, and so made a compleat convert, but, it is probable, he was, Paul would not do his business by the halves; as for *God his work is perfect*: When he became a Christian, he neither laid down his government, nor was turned out of it, but, we may suppose, as a Christian magistrate, by his influence, helped very much to propagate Christianity in that island. The tradition of the Romish church, which has taken care to find bishopricks for all the eminent converts we read of in *the Acts*, has made this *Sergius Paulus* bishop of Narbon in France, left there by Paul in his journey to Spain.

Thirdly, Their departure from the island of Cyprus. It is probable, they did a great deal more there than is here recorded, where an account is given only of that which was extraordinary, the conversion of *the deputy*. When they had done what they had to do,

1. They quitted the country, and went to Parga: Those that went were *Paul and his company*, which, it is probable, was increased in Cyprus, many being desirous to accompany him. *Ἀναχθίσεις οἱ περὶ τὸν Παῦλον*. They that were about Paul *loosed from Paphos*, which supposeth that he went too; but such an affection had his new friends for him, that they were always about him, and by their good will would be never from him.

2. Then John Mark quitted them, and returned to Jerusalem, without the consent of Paul and Barnabas; either he did not like the work, or wanted to go see his mother: It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again.

14. ¶ But when they departed from Parga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down. 15. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. 16. Then Paul stood up, and beckning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. 17. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people, when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. 18. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20. And after that he gave unto them judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. 22. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 23. O. this mans seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus: 24. When John had just preached

preached before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. 26. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. 27. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning him. 28. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. 30. But God raised him from the dead: 31. And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33. God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. 34. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35. Wherefore he faith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine holy One to see corruption. 36. For David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37. But he whom God raised again, saw no corruption. 38. ¶ Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, 41. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Perga in Pamphylia was a noted place, especially for a temple there erected to the goddess Diana, yet nothing at all is related of what Paul and Barnabas did there, only *thither they came*, ver. 13. and *thence they departed*, ver. 14. But the history of the apostles travels, as that of Christ's, passeth by many things worthy to have been recorded, because if all should have been written, the world could not have contained the books.

But the next place we find them in, is another *Antioch*, said to be in *Pisidia*, to distinguish it from that *Antioch* in Syria, from whence they were sent out. *Pisidia* was a province of the lesser Asia, bordering upon *Pamphylia*; this *Antioch*, it is likely, was the metropolis of it; abundance of Jews lived there, and to them the gospel was to be first preached; and Paul's sermon to them is what we have in these verses, which, it is likely, is the substance of what was preached by the apostles generally to the Jews in all places; for in dealing with them, the proper way was to shew them how the New Testament, which they would have them to receive, exactly agreed with the Old Testament, which they not only received, but were zealous for.

We have here,

First, The appearance which Paul and Barnabas made in a religious assembly of the Jews at *Antioch*, ver. 14. Though they had lately had so good success with a Roman deputy, yet, when they came to *Antioch*, they did not enquire for the chief magistrate, or make their court to him, but they applied themselves to the Jews, which is a further proof of their good affection to them, and their desire of their welfare.

1. They observed their time of worship, on the sabbath-day, the Jewish sabbath. The first day of the week they observed among themselves as a Christian sabbath, but, if they will meet the Jews, it must be on the seventh-day sabbath; which therefore, upon such occasions, they did, as yet, sometimes observe: For though it was by the death of Christ that the ceremonial law died, yet it was in the ruins of Jerusalem that it was to be buried; and therefore, though the morality of the fourth commandment was entirely transferred to the Christian sabbath, yet it was not incongruous to join with the Jews in their sabbath sanctification.

2. They met them in their place of worship, in the synagogue. Note, Sabbath-days should be kept holy in solemn assemblies, they are instituted chiefly for publick worship; the sabbath-day is a holy convocation, and, for that reason, no servile work must be done therein. Paul and Barnabas were strangers; but, wherever we

come, we must enquire out God's faithful worshippers, and join with them (as these apostles here did) as those that desire to keep up a communion with all saints; though they were strangers, yet they were admitted into the synagogue, and to sit down there. Care should be taken in places of publick worship, that strangers be accommodated, even the poorest; for those we know nothing else of, we know this, that they have precious souls, which our charity binds us to be concerned for.

Secondly, The invitation given them to preach.

1. The usual service of the synagogue was performed, ver. 15. The law and the prophets were read, a portion of each, the lessons for the day. Note, When we come together to worship God, we must do it not only by prayer and praise, but by the reading and hearing of the word of God; hereby we give him the glory due to his name, as our Lord and Lawgiver.

2. When that was done, they were asked, by the rulers of the synagogue, to give them a sermon, ver. 17. they sent a messenger to them with this respectful message, Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. It is probable, the rulers of the synagogue had met with them, and been in private conversation with them, before; and if they had not an affection to the gospel, yet had, at least, the curiosity to hear Paul preach; and therefore, not only gave him permission, but begged the favour of him, that he would speak a word of exhortation to the people. Note, 1. The bare reading of the scriptures in the publick assemblies is not sufficient, but they should be expounded, and the people exhorted out of them: This is spreading the net, and assisting people in doing that which is necessary to the making of the word profitable to them, and that is the applying of it to themselves. 2. Those that preside, and have power in publick assemblies, should provide for a word of exhortation to the people, whenever they come together. 3. Sometimes a word of exhortation from a strange minister may be of great use to the people, provided he be well approved. It is likely, Paul did often preach in the synagogues; for he was not thus invited to it by the rulers of the synagogues; for he often preached with much contention, 1 Thess. ii. 2. But these were more noble, more generous, than the rulers of the synagogues commonly were.

Thirdly, The sermon Paul preached in the synagogue of the Jews, at the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue. He gladly embraced the opportunity given him to preach Christ to his countrymen the Jews; did not object to them that he was a stranger, and that it was none of his business; nor object to himself that he may get ill-will by preaching Christ among the Jews; but stood up, as one prepared and determined to speak, and beckoned with his hand, to excite and prepare them to hear; he waved his hand as an orator, not only desiring silence and attention, but endeavouring to move affection, and to shew himself in earnest. Perhaps, upon the moving of them to give an exhortation to the people, there were those in the synagogue that were ready to mutiny against the rulers, and opposed the toleration of Paul's preaching, and that occasioned some tumult and commotion, which Paul endeavoured to quiet by that decent motion of his hand; as also by his modest desire of a patient, impartial hearing; Men of Israel, that are Jews by birth, and ye that fear God, that are profelyted to the Jewish religion, give audience; let me beg your attention a little, for I have something to say to you which concerns your everlasting peace, and would not say it in vain.

Now this excellent sermon is recorded to shew, that those who preached the gospel to the Gentiles, did it not till they had first used their utmost endeavours with the Jews, to persuade them to come in, and take the benefit of it; and that they had no prejudice at all against the Jewish nation, nor any desire that they should perish, but rather that they should turn and live. Every thing is touched in this sermon that might be proper, either to convince the judgment, or insinuate into the affections of the Jews, to prevail with them to receive and embrace Christ as the promised Messiah.

(1.) He owns them to be God's favourite people, whom he had taken into special relation to himself, and for whom he had done great things. Probably, the Jews of the dispersion, that lived in other countries, being more in danger of mingling with the nations, were more jealous of their peculiarity, than those that lived in their own land were; and therefore Paul is here very careful to take notice of it to their honour.

1. That the God of the whole earth was, in a particular manner, the God of this people Israel, a God in covenant with them, and that had given them a revelation of his mind and will, such as he had not given to any other nation or people; so that hereby they were distinguished from, and dignified above, all their neighbours, having peculiar precepts to be governed by, and peculiar promises to depend upon.

2. That he had chosen their fathers to be his friends; Abraham was called the friend of God; to be his prophets, by whom he would reveal his mind to his church, and to be the trustees of his covenant with the church: He puts them in mind of this, to let them know, that the reason why God favoured them, though undeserving, and ill deserving, was, because he would adhere to the choice he had made of their fathers, Deut. vii. 7, 8. They were beloved purely for the fathers' sake, Rom. xi. 28.

3. That he had *exalted that people*, and put a great deal of honour upon them, had advanced them into a people, and raised them from nothing then, *when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt*, and had nothing in them to recommend them to the divine favour: They ought to remember this, and to infer from hence, that God was no debtor to them; for it was *ex mero motu*, and not upon a valuable consideration, that they had the grant of the divine favour; and therefore it was revocable at pleasure; and God did them no wrong, if he, at length, plucked up the hedge of their peculiarity: But they *were debtors to him*, and obliged to receive such further discoveries as he should make of his will, and to admit such further additions as he should make to his church.

4. That he had *with a high hand brought them out of Egypt*, where they were not only strangers, but captives; had delivered them at the expence of a great many miracles, both of mercy to them, and judgment on their oppressors; *signs, and wonders*, Deut. iv. 34. and at the expence of a great many lives, *all the first-born of Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his host, in the Red sea*; *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, gave men for thee*, Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

5. That *he had suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness*, ver. 18. ἑτεροποιοῦσεν. Some think, it should be read, ἑτεροφύγοσεν, *he educated them*, because that is the word the Septuagint use concerning the fatherly care God took of that people, Deut. i. 31. Both may be included; for, 1. God made a great deal of provision for them *for forty years in the wilderness*, miracles were their daily bread, and kept them from starving; *they lacked not any thing*. 2. He exercised a great deal of patience with them; they were a provoking, murmuring, unbelieving people, and yet he bore with them, *did not deal with them as they deserved, but suffered his anger many a time to be turned away by the prayer and intercession of Moses*. So many years as we have each of us lived in this world, we must own that God has thus been as a tender father to us, has supplied our wants, has *fed us all our life long unto this day*, has been indulgent to us, a God of pardons, as he was to Israel, Neh. ix. 17. and *not extreme to mark what we have done amiss*; we have tried his patience, and yet not tired it: Let not the Jews insist too much upon the privileges of their peculiarity, for they had forfeited them a thousand times.

6. That he had put them in possession of *the land of Canaan*, ver. 19. *When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan*, that were doomed to be rooted out to make room for them, *he divided their land to them by lot*, and put them in possession of it: This was a signal favour of God to them, and he owns that hereby a great honour was put upon them, which he would not in the least derogate from.

7. That he had raised up men, spirited from heaven, to deliver them out of the hands of those that invaded their rights, and oppressed them, after their settlement in Canaan, ver. 20, 21. 1. *He gave them judges*, men qualified for publick service, and, by an immediate impulse upon their spirits, called to it, *pro re nata*, as the occasion required. Though they were a provoking people, and were never in servitude, but their sin brought them to it, yet, upon their petition, a deliverer was raised up. The critics find some difficulty in computing *these four hundred and fifty years*: From the deliverance out of Egypt, to David's expulsion of the Jebusites from the strong hold of Zion, which compleated the casting out of the heathen nations, *was four hundred and fifty years*; and most of that time they were under judges. Others thus: The government of the judges, from the death of Joshua, to the death of Eli, was just *three hundred thirty nine years*, but it is said to be [ἑς] *as it were four hundred and fifty years*, because the years of their servitude to the several nations that oppressed them, though really they were included in the years of the judges, yet are mentioned in the history as if they had been distinct from them: Now these all put together make *one hundred and eleven years*, and those added to the *three hundred thirty nine*, make them *four hundred and fifty*; as so many, though not really so many. 2. He governed them by a prophet, Samuel, a man divinely inspired to preside in their affairs. 3. He afterwards, at their request, *set a king over them*, ver. 21. Saul, the son of Kish; Samuel's government and his lasted *forty years*; which was a kind of transition from the theocracy to the kingly government. 4. At last he made David their king, ver. 22. *When God had removed Saul*, for his male-administration, *he raised up unto them David to be their king*, and made a covenant of royalty with him, and with his seed: Then, *when he had removed one king*, he did not leave them as sheep without a shepherd, but soon raised up another; *raised him up from a mean and low estate, raised him up on high*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. He quotes the testimony God gave concerning him, (1.) That his choice was divine; *I have found David*, Psalm lxxxix. 20. God himself pitched upon him: Finding implies seeking, as if God had ransacked all the families of Israel to find a man fit for his purpose, and this was he. (2.) That his character was divine; *a man after my own heart*; such an one as I would have; one on whom the image of God is stamped, and therefore one in whom God is well pleased, and whom he doth approve. This character was given of him before he was first anointed, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. *The Lord hath sought him out a man after his own heart*, such an one as he would have. (3.) That his conduct was divine, and under

a divine direction; *he shall fulfil all my will*: He shall desire and endeavour to do *the will of God*, and shall be enabled to do it, and employed in the doing of it, and go through with it.

Now all this seems to shew, not only the special favour of God to the people of Israel, which the apostle is very willing to oblige them with the acknowledgment of, but the further favours of another nature which he designed them, and which were now, by the preaching of the gospel, offered to them: Their deliverance out of Egypt, and settlement in Canaan, *were types and figures of good things to come*; the changes of their government shewed that it *made nothing perfect*, and therefore must give way to the *spiritual kingdom of the Messiah*, which was now in the setting up, and which, if they would admit it, and submit to it, would be *the glory of their people Israel*; and therefore they needed not conceive any jealousy at all of the preaching of the gospel, as if it tended in the least to damage the true excellencies of the Jewish church.

(2.) He gives them a full account of our Lord Jesus, passing from David to the Son of David, and shews that this Jesus is his promised seed, ver. 23. *Of this man's seed*, from that root of Jesse, from that man after God's own heart, *hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus*, who carries salvation in his name. How welcome should the preaching of the gospel of Christ be to the Jews, and how should they embrace it, as *well worthy of all acceptation*, when it brought them the tidings, 1. Of a Saviour, to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, as the judges of old, who were therefore called *saviours*; but this a Saviour to do that for them, which, it appears by the history, those could not do, *to save them from their sins*, their worst enemies. 2. A Saviour of God's raising up, that has his commission from heaven. 3. Raised up to be a Saviour unto Israel, to them in the first place *he was sent to bless them*; so far was the gospel from designing the rejection of Israel, that it designed the gathering of them! 4. Raised up of the seed of David, that ancient, royal family, which the people of Israel gloried so much in, and which, at this time, to the great disgrace of the whole nation, was buried in obscurity. It ought to be a great satisfaction to them, that God had raised up this horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David, Luke i. 69. 5. Raised up according to his promise, the promise to David, Psalm cxxxii. 11. *the promise to the Old Testament church*, in the latter times of it; *I will raise unto David a righteous branch*, Jer. xxiii. 5. This promise was it, to which the twelve tribes hoped to come, Acts xxvii. 7. why then should they entertain it so coldly now it was brought to them?

Now, concerning this Jesus, he tells them,

(1.) That John the baptist was his harbinger and forerunner; that great man, whom all acknowledged to be a prophet: Let them not say that the Messiah's coming was a surprize upon them, and that might excuse them if they took time to consider whether they should entertain him or no; for they had sufficient warning by John, who preached before his coming, ver. 24. Two things he did:

1. He made way for his entrance, by preaching the baptism of repentance, not to a few select disciples, but to all the people of Israel; he shewed them their sins, warned them of the wrath to come, called them to repentance, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and bound those to this who were willing to be bound by the solemn rite or sign of baptism, and by this he made ready a people prepared for the Lord Jesus, to whom his grace would be acceptable, when they were thus brought to know themselves.

2. He gave notice of his approach, ver. 25. *As he fulfilled his course*, when he was going on vigorously in his work, and had had wonderful success in it, and an established interest, now, *saith he*, to those that attended his ministry, *Whom think ye that I am?* What notions have you of me? What expectations from me? You may be thinking that I am the Messiah, whom you expect, but you are mistaken, *I am not he*: See John i. 20. But he is at the door; *behold, there cometh one immediately after me*, who will so far exceed me upon all accounts, *that I am not worthy to be employed in the meanest office about him*, no, not to help him on and off with his shoes; *whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to unloose*; and you may guess who that must be.

(2.) That the rulers, and people of the Jews, who should have welcomed him, and been his willing, forward, faithful subjects, were his persecutors, and murderers. When the apostles preach Christ as the Saviour, they are so far from concealing his ignominious death, and drawing a veil over it, that they always preach *Christ crucified*! yea, and (though that added much to the reproach of his sufferings) crucified by his own people, by them that dwelt in Jerusalem, the holy city, the royal city, and their rulers, ver. 27.

1. Their sin was, that though they found no cause of death in him, could not prove him, no, nor had any colour to suspect him guilty of any crime, the judge himself that tried him, when he had heard all they could say against him, declared he found no fault in him, yet they desired Pilate that he might be slain, ver. 28. and presented their address against Christ with such fury and outrage, that they compelled Pilate to crucify him, not only contrary to his inclination, but contrary to his conscience; they condemned him to so great a death, though they could not convict him of the least sin. Paul cannot charge this upon his hearers, as Peter did, chap.

ii. 23. *You have with wicked hands crucified and slain him*; for these, though *Jews*, were far enough off; but he chargeth it upon *the Jews at Jerusalem*, and *the rulers*, to shew what little reason *those Jews of the dispersion* had to be so jealous for the honour of their nation as they were, when it had brought upon itself such a load and stain of guilt as this, and how justly they might have been cut off from all benefit by the Messiah, who had thus abused him, and yet they were not, but, notwithstanding all this, the preaching of this gospel shall *begin at Jerusalem*.

2. The reason of this was, because *they knew him not*, ver. 27. They knew not who he was, nor what errand he came into the world upon; for *if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*; Christ owned this in extenuation of their crime, *They know not what they do*; and so did Peter, *I wot, that through ignorance ye did this*, Acts iii. 17. It was also because they *knew not the voice of the prophets*, though they heard them *read every sabbath day*; they did not understand nor consider that it was foretold, that the Messiah should suffer, or else they would never have been the instruments of his suffering. Note, Many that read the prophets, yet do not *know the voice of the prophets*, do not understand the meaning of the scriptures; have the sound of the gospel in their ears, but not the sense of them in their heads, or favour of them in their hearts. And therefore men do not know Christ, nor know how to carry it towards him, because they do not know the voice of the prophets, who *testified beforehand concerning Christ*.

3. God over-ruled them for the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament; *because they knew not the voice of the prophets*, which warned them not to touch God's anointed, *they fulfilled them in condemning him*; for so it was written, that *Messiah the Prince shall be cut off; but not for himself*. Note, It is possible that men may be fulfilling scripture prophecies, even when they are breaking scripture precepts; particularly in the persecution of the church, as in the persecution of Christ. And this justifies the reason which is sometimes given for the obscurity of scripture prophecies, that if they were too plain and obvious, the accomplishment of them would thereby be prevented; so Paul saith here, *because they knew not the voice of the prophets, therefore they have fulfilled them*; which implies, that if they had understood them, they would not have fulfilled them.

4. All that was foretold concerning the sufferings of the Messiah was fulfilled in Christ, ver. 29. *When they had fulfilled all the rest that was written of him*, even to the giving of him vinegar to drink in his thirst; then they fulfilled what was foretold concerning his being buried, they *took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre*: This is taken notice of here, as that which made his resurrection the more illustrious. Christ was separated from this world, as those that are buried have nothing more to do with this world nor this world with them. And therefore our compleat separation from sin is represented by our being *buried with Christ*. And a good Christian will be willing to be buried alive with Christ. They laid him a sepulchre, and thought they had him fast.

3. That he *rose again from the dead*, and saw no corruption; this was the great truth that was to be preached; for it is the main pillar by which the whole fabrick of the gospel is supported, and therefore he insists largely upon this, and shews,

1. That he rose by consent; when he was imprisoned in the grave for our debt, he did not break prison, but had a fair and legal discharge from the arrest he was under, ver. 30. *God raised him from the dead*; sent an angel on purpose to roll away the stone from the prison door, returned him the Spirit which at his death he had committed into the hands of his Father, and quickened him by the holy Ghost. His enemies *laid him in a sepulchre*, with design he should always lie there; but God said, No; and it was soon seen *whose word should stand, his or theirs*.

2. That there was sufficient proof of his being risen, ver. 31. *He was seen many days*, in divers places, upon divers occasions, by them that were most intimately acquainted with him, for they *came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem*, were his constant attendants, and *they are his witnesses unto the people*; were appointed to be so, have attested the thing many a time, and are ready to attest it, though they were to die for the same. Paul saith nothing of his own seeing him, which he mentions, 1 Cor. xv. 8. because it was in a vision, which was more convincing to himself than it could be when produced to others.

3. That the resurrection of Christ was the performance of the promise made to the patriarchs; it was not only true news, but good news, in declaring this, we *declare unto you glad tidings*, ver. 32, 33. which should be in a particular manner acceptable to you Jews; so far are we from designing to put any slur upon you, or do you any wrong, that the doctrine we preach, if you receive it aright, and understand it, brings you the greatest honour and satisfaction imaginable; for, it is in the resurrection of Christ, that the promise which was *made to your fathers, is fulfilled to you*. He acknowledges it to be the dignity of the Jewish nation, that *to them pertained the promises*, Rom. ix. 4. that they were the heirs of the promise, as they were the children of the patriarchs to whom the promises were first made: The great promise of the Old Testament, was that of the Messiah, *in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed*, and not the family of Abraham only; though it was to

be the peculiar honour of that family that he should be raised up of it, yet it was to be the common benefit of all families, that he should be raised up to them. Note, 1. God hath *raised up Jesus*, advanced him, and exalted him; *raised him again*, so we read it, meaning *from the dead*. We may take in both senses. God *raised up Jesus* to be a prophet at his baptism; to be a priest to make atonement at his death; and to be a king to rule over all at his ascension; and *his raising him up from the dead*, was the confirmation and ratification of all these commissions, and proved him *raised of God* to these offices. 2. This is the fulfilling of the promises made to the fathers, the promise of sending the Messiah, and of all those benefits and blessings which were to be had with him, and by him; this is he that should come, and in him you have all that *God promised in the Messiah*, though not all that *you promised yourselves*. Paul puts himself into the number of the Jews, to whom the promise was fulfilled, *to us their children*: Now if they who preached the gospel brought them *these glad tidings*, instead of looking upon them as enemies to their nation, they ought to care for them as their best friends, and embrace their doctrine with both arms; for if they valued the promise so much, and themselves by it, much more the performance. And the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, which was the great thing that the Jews found themselves aggrieved at, was so far from infringing the promise made to them, that the promise itself, that *all the families of the earth should be blessed in the Messiah*, could not otherwise be accomplished.

4. That the resurrection of Christ, was the great proof of his being the *Son of God*; and confirms what was written in the second psalm, (thus ancient was the order in which the psalms are now placed,) ver. 7. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*; that the resurrection of Christ from the dead, was designed to evidence and evince this, is plain from that of the apostle, Rom. i. 4. *He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead*. When he was first *raised up* out of obscurity, God declared concerning him by a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son*, Mat. iii. 17. which has a plain reference to that in the second psalm, *Thou art my Son*; abundance of truth there is couched in those words, that this Jesus was *begotten of the Father before all worlds*; was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, as the son is of the father's; that he was the *λογος*, the *eternal thought of the eternal mind*; that he was conceived by the power of the holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin; for upon that account also, *that holy thing was called the Son of God*, Luke i. 35. That he was God's agent in creating and governing the world, and in redeeming it and reconciling it to himself, and *faithful as a son in his own house*; and as such was *heir of all things*. Now all this which was declared at Christ's baptism, and again at his transfiguration, was undeniably proved by his resurrection. The decree which was so long before declared, was then confirmed; and the reason why it was impossible he should be held by the bands of death was, because he was the *Son of God*, and consequently had *life in himself*, which he could not lay down, but with a design to resume it. When his eternal generation is spoken of, it is not improper to say, *This day have I begotten thee*, for *from everlasting to everlasting*, is with God as it were one and the same eternal day. Yet it may also be accommodated to his resurrection, in a subordinate sense, *This day have I made it to appear that I have begotten thee*: And *this day have I begotten* all that are given to thee; for it is said, 1 Pet. i. 3. *that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our God and Father, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.

5. That his being raised the *third day*, so as not to *see corruption*, and to a heavenly life, so as *no more to return to corruption*, i. e. to the state of the dead, as others did who were raised to life, doth further confirm his being the Messiah promised.

1. He rose *to die no more*; so it is expressed, Rom. vi. 9. *As concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption*, i. e. to the grave, which is called *corruption*, John xvii. 14. Lazarus came out of the grave with his grave clothes on, because he was to use them again; but Christ having no more occasion for them, left them behind. Now this was the fulfilling of that scripture, Isa. lv. 3. *I will give you the sure mercies of David*, τὰ ὅσια Δαβὶδ τὰ πιστά, *the holy things of David, the faithful things*; for in the promise made to David, and in him to Christ, great stress is laid upon the faithfulness of God, Psal. lxxxix. 1, 2, 5, 24, 33. And upon the oath God had sworn *by his holiness*, ver. 35. Now this makes them sure mercies indeed, that he who is intrusted with the dispensing of them, is risen *to die no more*; so that he ever lives to see his own will executed, and the blessings he hath purchased for us, given out to us. As if Christ had died, and had not *risen again*, so if he had risen to *die again*, we had come short of the sure mercies, or at least could not have been sure of them.

2. He rose so soon after he was dead, that his body did not *see corruption*; for it is not till the third day, that the body begins to change. Now this was promised to David, it was one of the *sure mercies of David*; for it was said to him in Psal. xvi. 10. *Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption*, ver. 35. God had promised to David, that he would raise up the Messiah of his seed, who should therefore be a man, but should not like other men *see corruption*. This promise could not have its accomplishment in David, but looked forward to Christ.

1. It could not be accomplished in David himself, *ver. 36.* for David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, who raised him up to be what he was, *fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption.* Here we have a short account of the life, death and burial of the patriarch David, and his continuance under the power of death. 1. His life; *he served his own generation by the will of God,* before he slept the sleep of death. David was a useful good man; he did good in the world, *by the will of God,* he made God's precepts his rule; he *served his own generation,* so as therein to serve God, he so *served and pleased men (as whatever the king did, pleased the people,* 2 Sam. iii. 36.) as still to keep himself the faithful servant of God. See Gal. i. 10. He served the good of men; but did not serve the will of man. Or, by the will of God's providence so ordering it, qualifying him for, and calling him to a publick station, he *served his own generation*; for every creature is that to us, that God makes it to be. David was a great blessing to the age wherein he lived, he was the servant of his generation; many are the curse, and plague, and burthen of their generation. Even those that are in a lower and narrower sphere yet must look upon it, that therefore they live to *serve their generation* (and those that will do good in the world, must make themselves servants of all, 1 Cor. ix. 19.) We were not born for ourselves, but are members of communities, to which we must study to be serviceable. Yet here is the difference between David and Christ, that David was to serve only *his own generation*, that generation in which he lived, and therefore when he had done what he had to do, and written what he had to write, he died, and continued in the grave; but Christ (not by his writings or words upon record only as David, but by his personal agency) was to serve all generations, must ever live to reign over the house of Jacob, not as David, for forty years, but for all ages *as long as the sun and moon endured,* Psal. lxxxix. 29. His throne must be as the days of heaven, and all generations must *be blessed in him,* Psal. lxxii. 17. 2. His death; he *fell asleep.* Death is a sleep, a quiet rest to those that, while they lived, laboured in the service of God and their generation. Observe, He did not *fall asleep* till he had *served his generation*, till he had done the work for which God raised him up. God's servants have their work assigned them, and when they have *accomplished as a husbandman his day*, then, and not till then, they are called to rest. God's witnesses never die till they have finished their testimony; and then *the sleep, the death, of the labouring man will be sweet.* David was not permitted to build the temple, and therefore when he had made preparation for it, which was the service he was designed to, he *fell asleep*, and left the work to Solomon. 3. His burial, he was *laid to his fathers.* Though he was buried in the *cave of David,* 1 Kings ii. 10. and not in the sepulchre of Jesse his father at Bethlehem, yet he might be said to be *laid to his fathers*; for the grave, in general, is the *habitation of our fathers*, of those that are gone before us, Psal. xlix. 10. 4. His continuance in the grave; he *saw corruption.* We are sure he did not rise again; this St. Peter insist upon, when he freely speaks of the patriarch David, *Acts ii. 29. He is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day,* i. e. He saw corruption, and therefore that promise could not have its accomplishment in him, *q. d.* But,

2. It was accomplished in the Lord Jesus, *ver. 37. He whom God raised again, saw no corruption*; for it was in him that the sure mercies were to be reserved for us. He rose the *third day*, and therefore did not see corruption then; and he rose to *die no more*, and therefore never did. Of him therefore the promise must be understood, and no other.

3. Having given them this account of the Lord Jesus, he comes to make application of it.

1. In the midst of his discourse to engage their attention, he had told his hearers, that they were concerned in all this, *ver. 26. To you men, the word of salvation is sent*; to you first. If you by your unbelief make it a word of refection to you, you may thank yourselves; but it is sent to you for a word of *liberation*; if it be not so, it is your own fault. Let them not peevishly argue, that because it was sent to the Gentiles, who had no communion with them, therefore it was not sent to them; for to them it was sent in the first place. *To you men* this is sent, and not to the angels that sinned. To you living men, and not to the congregation of the dead and damned, whose day of grace is over. He therefore speaks to them with tenderness and respect, you are *men and brethren*; and so we are to look upon all those that stand fair with us for the great salvation, as having the word of salvation sent to them. Those to whom he such by warrant from heaven here bring the *word of salvation*, are, 1. The native Jews, Hebrews of the Hebrews, as Paul himself was; *children of the flesh of Abraham*, though a degenerate race, yet to you is this word of salvation sent; nay, it is therefore sent to you to save you from your sins. It is an advantage to be of a good stock; for though salvation does not always follow the children of godly parents, yet the word of *liberation* doth; *Abraham was circumcised and his children and his household after him.* 2. The people, i. e. the Gentiles that by birth were in some degree brought over to the Jews religion; *Whosoever among you that feareth God.* You that have a sense of natural religion, and have subjected yourselves to the laws of that, and taken hold of the comforts of that, *as you is the word of the Lord Jesus*, you need the further discoveries and directions of revealed religion, are prepared for them, and will

bid them welcome, and therefore shall certainly be welcome to take the benefit of them.

2. In the close of his discourse, he applies what he had said concerning Christ to his hearers. He had told them a long story concerning this Jesus, now they would be ready to ask, what is all this to us? And he tells them plainly, it is to them.

1. It will be their unspeakable advantage if they embraced Jesus Christ, and believe this word of salvation, it will relieve them there where their greatest danger lies; and that is from the guilt of their sins. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren,* we are warranted to proclaim it to you, and you are called to take notice of it. He did not stand up to preach before them, but to preach to them, and not without hopes of prevailing with them; for they are men, reasonable creatures, and capable of being argued with; they are brethren, spoken to, and dealt with by men like themselves; not only of the same nature, but of the same nation. It is proper for the preachers of the gospel to call their hearers brethren; as speaking familiarly to them, and with an affectionate concern for their welfare, and as being equally interested with them in the gospel they preach. Let all that hear the gospel of Christ, know these two things,

1. That it is an *act of indemnity* granted by the King of kings to the children of men, who stand attainted at his bar of treason against his crown and dignity; and it is for, and in consideration of the mediation of Christ between God man, that this act of grace is passed and proclaimed, *ver. 35. Through this man,* who died and rose again, *is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* We are to tell you in God's name, that your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven, and how it is come about that they may be so, without any injury to God's honour; and how you may obtain the forgiveness of your sins. We are to preach repentance for the remission of sins, and divine grace giving both *repentance and remission of sins.* The remission of sins is *through this man*, by his merit it was purchased, in his name it is offered, and by his authority it is bestowed; and therefore you are concerned to be acquainted with him, and interested in him. We preach to you *the forgiveness of sins*; that is the salvation we bring you, the word of God and therefore you ought to bid us welcome, and look upon us as your friends, and messengers of good tidings.

2. That it does that for us which the law of Moses could not do. The Jews were jealous for the law, and because it prescribed expiatory and pacificatory sacrifices, and a great variety of purifications, fancied they might be justified by it before God: No, saith Paul, be it known unto you, that it is by Christ only, that *they who believe in him*, and none but they only, are *justified from all things*, from all the guilt and stain of sin, *from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses,* *ver. 39.* therefore they ought to entertain and embrace the gospel, and not to adhere to the law in opposition to it, because the gospel is perfective, not destructive of the law. Note, 1. The great concern of sinners is, to be justified, to be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. 2. Those that are truly justified from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the sinner, he is undone. 3. It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses; not by his moral law; for we have all broke it, and are transgressing it daily, so that instead of justifying us, it condemns us; not his remedial law, for it was not possible that the *blood of bulls and goat should take away sin*; should satisfy God's offended justice, or pacify the sinner's wounded conscience. It was but a ritual and typical institution. See Heb. ix. 4. x. 1, 4. 4. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our judge, but by him as our *righteousness*, the *Lord our righteousness*. 5. All that *believe in Christ*, that rely upon him, and give up themselves to be ruled by him, are justified by him; and none but they. 6. What the law *could not do* for us in that it was weak, that the gospel of Christ doth, and therefore it was folly, out of a jealousy for the law of Moses and the honour of that, to conceive a jealousy of the gospel of Christ, and the designs of that.

2. It is at their *utmost peril* if they *reject* the gospel of Christ, and turn their backs upon the offer now made them, *ver. 40. 41. Beware therefore*; you have a fair invitation given you, look to yourselves, lest you either neglect or oppose it. Note, Those to whom the gospel is preached, must see themselves upon their trial, and good behaviour, and are concerned to beware, lest they be found refusers of the grace offered. Beware, lest you, not only come short of the blessing and benefits spoken of in the prophets, as coming upon those that believe, but fall under the doom spoken of in the prophets, as coming upon those that persist in unbelief; *lest that come upon you which is spoken of.* Note, The threatenings are warnings; what we are told will come upon impenitent sinners, is designed to awaken us to beware lest it do come upon us. Now the prophecy referred to, we have, *Hab. i. 5.* Where the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans is foretold as an incredible, unparalleled destruction, and that is here applied to the destruction that was coming upon that nation, by the Romans, for their rejecting the gospel of Christ. The apostle follows the Septuagint translation, which reads, *behold ye despoiled*; for, *behold ye among the heathen*, because it made the text more apposite to his purpose.

1. Take heed lest the guilt *come upon you* which was *spoken of in the prophets*, the guilt of despising the gospel, and the tenders of it, and despising the Gentiles that were advanced to partake of it. *Be-ware*, lest it be said to you, *behold you despisers*. Note, It is the ruin of many, that they despise religion, they look upon it as a thing below them, and are not willing to stoop to it.

2. Take heed, lest the judgment *come upon you* which was *spoken of in the prophets*; that you shall wonder and perish, *i. e.* wonderfully perish; your perdition shall be amazing to yourselves, and all about you. They that will not wonder and be saved, shall wonder and perish. They that enjoyed the privileges of the church, and flattered themselves with a conceit that those would save them, will wonder when they find their vain presumption over-ruled, and that their privileges do but make their condemnation the more intolerable. Let the unbelieving Jews expect that God will *work a work in their days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you*. This may be understood as a prediction, either, 1. Of their sin, that they should be incredulous. That that great *work of God*, the redemption of the world by Christ, though it should be in the most solemn manner *declared unto them*, yet they would in *no wise believe it*, Isa. liii. 1. *Who hath believed our report?* Though it was of God's working, to whom nothing is impossible; and of his declaring, who cannot lye, yet they would not give credit to it. They that had the honour and advantage to have this work wrought in their days, yet had not the grace to believe it. Or, 2. Of their destruction; the dissolving of the Jewish polity, the taking of the kingdom of God from them, and giving it to the Gentiles, the destruction of their holy house and city, and the dispersion of their people, was a work which one would not have believed should ever have been done, considering how much they had been the favourites of heaven. The calamities that were brought upon them, were such as were never before brought upon any people, Mat. xxiv. 21. It was said of their destruction by the Chaldeans, and it was true of their last destruction, *all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem as they did*, Lam. iv. 12. Thus is there a *strange punishment to the workers of iniquity*; especially to the despisers of Christ, Job xxxi. 3.

42. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews, and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44. ¶ And the next sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. 45. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge your selves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. 49. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. 50. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. 52. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the holy Ghost.

The design of this story being to vindicate the apostles, especially Paul, (as he doth himself at large, Rom. xi.) from the reflexions of the Jews upon him for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, it is here observed, that he proceeded therein with all the caution imaginable, and upon due consideration, which here there is an instance of.

First, There were some of the Jews that were so incensed against the preaching of the gospel, not to the Gentiles but to them, that they would not bear to hear it, but *went out of the synagogue*, while Paul was preaching, ver. 42. in contempt of him and his doctrine, and to the disturbance of the congregation. It is likely, they whispered among themselves, exciting one another to it, and did it by consent. Now this spoke,

1. An open infidelity; as plain a profession of unbelief, as coming to hear the gospel is of faith. They thus publicly avowed their contempt of Christ and of his doctrine and law, were not ashamed, neither could they blush; and they thus endeavoured

to beget prejudices in the minds of others against the gospel, they went out to draw others to *follow their pernicious ways*.

2. An obstinate infidelity; they went out of the synagogue, not only to shew that they did not believe the gospel, but because they were resolved they would not, and therefore got out of the hearing of those things that had a tendency to convince them. They *stopped their ears*, like the deaf adder. Justly therefore was the gospel taken from them, when they first took themselves from it; and turned themselves out of the church, before they were turned out of it: For it is certainly true, God never leaves any, till they first leave him.

Secondly, The Gentiles were as *willing to hear* the gospel, as those rude and ill-conditioned Jews were to get out of the hearing of it; they *besought that these words*, or words to this effect, *might be preached to them the next sabbath*; in the week between, so some take it; on the second and fifth day of the week, which in some synagogues were their lecture days. But it appears, ver. 44. that it was the *next sabbath-day* that they came together. They begged,

1. That the same offer might be made to them, that was made to the Jews; Paul in this sermon had brought the *word of salvation* to the Jews and proselytes, but had taken no notice of the Gentiles; and therefore they begged, that forgiveness of sins, through Christ, might be preached to them, as it was to the Jews. The Jews leavings, nay, loathings, were their longings. This justifies Paul in his preaching to them, that he was invited to it, as Peter was sent for to Cornelius. Who could refuse to break the bread of life to those who begged so hard for it, and to give that to the poor at the door, which the children at the table, threw under their feet?

2. That the same instructions might be given to them; they had heard the doctrine of Christ, but did not understand it at the first hearing, nor could they remember all that they had heard, and therefore they begged it might be preached to them again. Note, It is good to have the word of Christ repeated to us. What we have heard, we should desire to *hear again*, that it may take deep root in us, and the nail that is driven may be clenched, and be as a *nail in a sure place*. To hear the same things should not be grievous, because it is safe, Phil. iii. 1. It aggravates the ill disposition of the Jews, that the Gentiles desired to hear that often, which they were not willing to hear once; and commends the good disposition of the Gentiles, that they did not follow the ill example which the Jews set them.

Thirdly, There were some, nay, there were many both of Jews and proselytes that were wrought upon by the preaching of the gospel; they who aggravated the matter of the Jews rejection by the preaching of the gospel, cried out, as is usual in such cases, they have *cast away*, and *cast off*, all the people of God. Nay, saith Paul, that is not so; for abundance of the Jews have embraced Christ, and are taken in, himself for one, Rom. xi. 1, 5. So it was here, *many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas*, and received further instructions and encouragement from them.

1. They submitted to the grace of God, and were admitted to the benefit and comfort of it; that is implied in their being exhorted to continue in it. They *followed Paul and Barnabas*, *i. e.* they became their disciples, or rather the disciples of Christ, whose agents they were. Those that join themselves to Christ, will join themselves to his ministers, and follow them. And Paul and Barnabas, though they were sent to the Gentiles, yet bid the Jews welcome to them, that were willing to come under their instructions; such hearty well-wishers were they to all the Jews, and their friends, if they pleased.

2. They were exhorted and encouraged to persevere herein; *Paul and Barnabas speaking to them* with all the freedom and friendship imaginable, *persuaded them to continue in the grace of God*; to hold fast that which they had received; to continue in their belief of the gospel of grace, to continue in their dependence upon the Spirit of grace, and attendance upon the means of grace. And the grace of God shall not be wanting to those who thus continue in it.

Fourthly, There was a cheerful attendance upon the preaching of the gospel the *next sabbath-day*, ver. 44. *Almost the whole city*, the generality of which were Gentiles, *came together to hear the word of God*.

1. It is probable Paul and Barnabas were not idle in the *week-days*; but took all opportunities in the week between (as some think the Gentiles desired) to bring them acquainted with Christ, and to raise their expectations from him. They did a great deal of service to the gospel in private discourse, and conversation, as well as in their publick sermons. Wisdom cried in the chief places of concourse, and the opening of the gates, as well as in the synagogues, Prov. i. 20, 21.

This brought a vast concourse of people to the *synagogue* on the *sabbath-day*; some came out of curiosity, the thing being new; others, longing to see what the Jews would do upon the second tender of the gospel to them; and many who had heard something of the *word of God*, came to hear more; and to hear it, *not as the word of men*, but as the *word of God*, by which we must be ruled and judged. Now this justified Paul in preaching to the Gentiles,

that he met with the most encouraging auditories among them. There the *fields* were *white to the harvest*, and therefore, why should he not there put in his sickle?

Fifthly, The Jews were enraged at this; and not only would not receive the gospel themselves, but were filled with indignation at them that crowded after it, *ver. 45. When the Jews saw the multitudes*, and considered what an encouragement it was to Paul to go on in his work, when he saw people thus flying like doves to their windows, and what probability there was that among these multitudes, some would be, without doubt, wrought upon, and it is likely the greater part, to embrace Christ, this filled them with *envy*.

1. They grudged the interest the apostles had in the people; were vexed to see the synagogue so full when they were to preach. This was the same spirit that worked in the Pharisees toward Christ, they were cut to the heart when they saw *the whole world go after him*. When the kingdom of heaven was opened, they not only would not go in themselves, but were angry with them that did.

2. They opposed the doctrine the apostles preached; they spoke against those things that were spoken by Paul, cavilled at them, started objections against them, finding some fault or other with every thing he said, *contradicting, and blaspheming, ἀντίλεγον ἀντιλέγοντες, contradicting they contradicted*. They did it with the utmost spite and rage imaginable; they persisted in their contradiction, and nothing would silence them. They contradicted for contradiction sake, and denied that which was most evident. And when they could find no colour of objection, they broke out into ill language against Christ and his gospel, blaspheming him and it. From the language of the *carnal man* that receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and therefore contradicts them, they proceed to the language of *incarnate devils*, and blaspheme them. Commonly those who begin with contradicting, end with blaspheming.

Sixthly, The apostles hereupon solemnly and openly declare themselves discharged from their obligation to the Jews, and at liberty to bring the *word of salvation* to the Gentiles, even by the implicit consent of the Jews themselves. Never let the Jews lay the fault of the carrying of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles upon the apostles, for that complaint of theirs is for ever silenced by their own act and deed, for what they did here is for ever an estoppel to it. *Tender and refusal (we say) is good payment in law*. The Jews had the refusal of the gospel, and did refuse it, and therefore ought not to lay any thing against the Gentiles having it. In declaring this it is said, *ver. 46. Paul and Barnabas waxed bold*, more bold than they had been, while they were shy of looking favourably upon the Gentiles for fear of giving offence to the Jews, and laying a stumblingblock in their way. Note, There is a time for the preachers of the gospel, to shew as much of the boldness of the lion, as of the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove. When the adversaries of Christ's cause begin to be daring, it is not for its advocates to be sneaking. While there is any hopes of working upon those that oppose themselves, they must be *instructed with meekness*, 2 Tim. ii. 25. But when that method has long been tried in vain, we must *wax bold*; and tell them what will come of their opposition. The impudence of the enemies of the gospel instead of frightening, should rather embolden the friends of its cause, for they are sure they have a good cause, and they know whom they have trusted to bear them out.

Now Paul and Barnabas having made them a fair offer of gospel grace, here give them fair notice of their bringing it to the Gentiles, *by all means* (as Paul saith) *Rom. xi. 19. they might provoke them to emulation*.

1. They own that the Jews were intitled to the first offer. *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you*, to whom the promise was made; to you *of the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, whom Christ reckoned himself first sent to. And his charge to the preachers of his gospel to *begin at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiii. 27. was an implicit direction to all that went into other countries to begin with the Jews, to whom pertained the giving of the law, and therefore the preaching of the gospel. *Let the children first be sanctified*, Mark vii. 27.

2. They charge them with the refusal of it. *Ye put it from you*; you will not accept of it, nay, you will not so much as bear the offer of it, but take it as an affront to you. If men put the gospel from them, God justly takes it from them; why should *manna* be given to them that *scath* it, and call it *light bread*? Or the privileges of the gospel forced on them that put them away, and say *we have no part in David*. Herein you judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. In one sense we must all judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life, for there is nothing in us, or done by us, by which we can pretend to merit it, and we must be made sensible of this, but here the meaning is, you *discover or make it to appear* that you are *not meet* for eternal life; you throw away all your claims, and *bring it from his hands*, into whose hand the Father has given it, *κείνους γὰρ ἡμεῖς, in effect, put this judgment upon yourselves, and out of your own mouth you shall be judged*, you will not have it *by Christ*, by whom alone it is to be had, and so shall your doom be, you shall not have it at all.

3. Upon this they ground their preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, since you will not accept eternal life as it is offered, our

way is plain, *lo, we turn to the Gentiles*. If one will not, another will. If those that were first invited to the wedding-feast will not come, we must invite out of the *high-ways and hedges* those that will, for the *wedding must be furnished with guests*. If he that is next of kin will not do the kinsman's part, he must not complain that another will, *Ruth iv. 4*.

4. They justify themselves in this by a divine warrant, *ver. 47. For so hath the Lord commanded us*, the Lord Jesus gave us directions to witness to him in Jerusalem, and Judea first, and after that *to the utmost part of the earth*, to preach the gospel to *every creature*, to *disciple all nations*, and this is according to what was foretold in the Old Testament, when the Messiah, in the prospect of the Jews infidelity, was ready to say, *I have laboured in vain*, he was told to his satisfaction, that though *Israel was not gathered*, yet *he should be glorious*; that his blood should not be shed in vain, nor his purchase made in vain, nor his doctrine preached in vain, nor his Spirit sent in vain, for, *I have set thee*, not only raised thee up, but established thee to be *a light of the Gentiles*, not only a shining light for a time, but a standing light, set for a light; *that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*. Note, 1. Christ is not only the saviour, but the salvation, is himself our righteousness, and life, and strength. 2. Wherever Christ is designed to be salvation, he is set up, to be a light; he enlightens the understanding and so saves the soul. 3. He is, and is to be *light and salvation* to the Gentiles, to the *ends of the earth*. Those of any nation should be welcome to him, some of every nation have heard of him, *Rom. x. 18. and all nations shall at length become his kingdom*. This prophecy has had its accomplishment in part, in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in this island of ours, which lies, as it were, in the *ends of the earth*, a corner of the world, and shall be accomplished more and more, when the time comes for the *bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles*.

Seventhly, The Gentiles cheerfully embraced that which the Jews scornfully rejected, *ver. 48, 49*. Never was land lost for want of heirs; *through the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles*; the *casting off them* was the *reconciling of the world*, and the *diminishing of them* the *riches of the Gentiles*, so the apostles shews at large, *Rom. xi. 11, 12, 15*. The Jews the natural branches were *broken off*, and the Gentiles that were *branches of the wild olive*, were thereupon *grafted in*, *ver. 17, 19*. Now here we are told how the Gentiles welcomed this happy turn in their favours.

1. They took the comfort of it; *when they heard this, they were glad*. It was good news to them that they might have admission into covenant and communion with God, by a clearer, and nearer, and better way than submitting to the ceremonial law, and being profelyted to the Jewish religion; that the *partition wall* was taken down, and they were as welcome to the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom as the Jews themselves, and might share in their promise, without coming under their yoke. This was indeed *glad tidings of great joy to all people*. Note, Our being put into a possibility of salvation, and a capacity for it, ought to be the matter of our rejoicing; when the Gentiles did but hear that the offers of grace should be made them, the word of grace preached to them, and the means of grace afforded them, *they were glad*; now there is some hopes for us, many grieve under doubts whether they have an interest in Christ or no, when they should be rejoicing that they may have an interest in him; the golden scepter is held out to them, and they are invited to come to touch the top of it.

2. They gave God the praise of it. They *glorified the word of the Lord*; that is Christ, so some; the essential word; they conceived a mighty veneration for him, and expressed the high thoughts they had of him. Or rather *the gospel*; the more they knew of it the more they admired it. O! what a light, what a power, what a treasure, doth this gospel bring along with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises, how far transcending all other institutions, how plainly divine and heavenly is its original! Thus they *glorified the word of the Lord*, and that is it which he has himself *magnified above all his name*, *Psal. xlii. 8, 2. and will magnify and make honourable*, *Isa. xlii. 21*. They *glorified the word of the Lord*, 1. Because now the knowledge of it was diffused, and not confined to the Jews only. Note, It is the glory of the word of the Lord that the further it spreads, the brighter it shines; which shews it to be not like the light of a candle, but like that of the sun when he *goes forth in his strength*. 2. Because now the knowledge of it was brought to them; Note, Those speak best of the honour of the word of the Lord that speak experimentally, that have themselves been captivated by the power, and comforted with the sweetness of it.

3. Many of them became not only professors of the Christian faith, but sincerely obedient to the faith; *as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*, i. e. God, by his Spirit, wrought true faith in them, for whom he had in his counsels *from everlasting* designed a happiness to everlasting. 1. Those *believed*, to whom God gave grace to believe, whom, by a secret, but *mighty operation*, he brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ, and made willing in the day of his power. Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual. It is called *the faith of the operation of God*, *Col. ii. 12. and is said to be wrought by the same power that raised up Christ*, *1.eph. i. 19, 20*. 2. God

gave this grace *to believe*, to all those among them who *were ordained to eternal life*; for *whom he had predestinated, them he also called*, Rom. viii. 30. Or, *as many as were disposed to eternal life*, as many as had a concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God hath treasured up that life, 1 John v. 11. and who is the only way to it; and it was the grace of God that wrought it in them. Thus all those captives, and those only, took the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation, *whose spirit God had raised to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem*, Ezra i. 5. Those will be brought to believe in Christ, that, by his grace, are well disposed to eternal life, and make that their aim.

4. When they believed, they did what they could to spread the knowledge of Christ, and his gospel, among their neighbours, ver. 49. *And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region*; when it was received with so much satisfaction in the chief city, it soon spread itself into all parts of the country: Those new converts were themselves ready to communicate to others that which they were so full of themselves. *The Lord gave the word, and then great was the company of them that published it*, Psalm lxxviii. 11. Those that have got acquaintance with Christ themselves, will do what they can to bring others acquainted with him. Those in great and rich cities that have received the gospel, should not think to engross it, as if, like learning and philosophy, it were only to be the entertainment of the more polite and elevated part of mankind, but should do what they can to get it published in the country among the ordinary sort of people, the poor and unlearned, who have souls to save as well as they.

Eighthly, Paul and Barnabas, having sowed the seeds of a Christian church there, quitted the place, and went to do the like elsewhere. We read not any thing of their working miracles here, to confirm their doctrine, and to convince people of the truth of it; for though God then did ordinarily make use of that method of conviction, yet he could, when he pleased, do his work without it; and begetting faith by the immediate influence of his Spirit, was itself the greatest miracle to those in whom it was wrought; yet, it is probable, they did work miracles; for we find they did in the next place they came to, chap. xiv. 3. Now here we are told,

1. How the unbelieving Jews expelled the apostles out of that country: They first turned their back upon them, and then lift up the heel against them, ver. 50. *They raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas*, excited the mob to persecute them in their way, by insulting their persons as they went along the streets; excited the magistrates to persecute them in their way, by imprisoning and punishing them; when they could not resist the wisdom and spirit wherewith they spoke, they had recourse to these brutish methods, the last refuge of an obstinate infidelity. Satan, and his agents, are most exasperated against the preachers of the gospel, when they see them go on successfully, and therefore then will be sure to raise persecution against them. Thus it has been the common lot of the best men in the world to suffer ill for doing well, to be persecuted instead of being preferred for the good services they have done to mankind. Observe,

(1.) What method they took to give them trouble; they stirred up the devout and honourable women against them: The Jews could not make any considerable interest themselves, but they applied themselves to some ladies of quality in the city, that were well affected to the Jewish religion, and were *profelytes of the gate*, therefore called *devout women*: These, according to the genius of their sex, were zealous in their way, and bigotted; and it was easy, by false stories and misrepresentations, to incense them against the gospel of Christ, as if it had been destructive of all religion, which really it is perfective of. It is good to see *honourable women devout*, and well affected to religious worship; the less they have to do in the world, the more they should do for their souls, and the more time they should spend in communion with God; but it is sad, when, under colour of devotion to God, they conceive an enmity to Christ, as those here did. What! women persecutors! Can they forget the tenderness and compassion of their sex? What! *honourable women*! Can they thus stain their honour, and disgrace themselves, and do so mean a thing? But, which is strangest of all, *devout women*! Will they kill Christ's servants, and think therein they do God service? Let those therefore that have zeal, see that it be according to knowledge. By these devout and honourable women, they stirred up likewise the chief men of the city, the magistrates and the rulers, who had power in their hands, and set them against the apostles, who had so little consideration as to suffer themselves to be made the tools of this ill-natured party, who neither would go into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffer those that were entering to go in.

(2.) How far they carried it; so far that they expelled them out of their coasts; they banished them, ordered them to be carried (as we say) from constable to constable, till they were forced out of their jurisdiction; so that it was not by fear, but downright violence, that they were driven out. This was one method which the over-ruling providence of God took, to keep the first planters of the church from staying too long at a place, as, Matt. x. 23. *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another*, that thus you may the sooner go over the cities of Israel. This was likewise a

method God took, to make those that were well disposed, the more warmly affected towards the apostles; for it is natural to us to pity those that are persecuted, and to think the better of those that suffer, when we know they suffer unjustly, and to be the more ready to help them: The expelling of the apostles out of their coasts, made people inquisitive what evil they had done, and, perhaps, raised them more friends, than conniving at them in their coasts would have done.

2. How the apostles abandoned and rejected the unbelieving Jews, ver. 51. *They shook off the dust of their feet against them*. When they went out of the city they used this ceremony in the sight of them that sat in the gate; or, when they went out of the borders of their country, in the sight of them that were sent to see the country rid of them. Hereby, 1. They declared that they would have no more to do with them, would take nothing that was theirs; for they sought not theirs, but them; dust they are, and let them keep their dust to themselves, it shall not cleave to them. 2. They expressed their detestation of their infidelity, and that, though they were Jews by birth, yet, having rejected the gospel of Christ, they were in their eyes no better than heathen and profane: As Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, are equally acceptable to God, and good men; so, if they do not, they are equally abominable. 3. Thus they set them at defiance, and expressed their contempt of them, and their malice, which they looked upon as impotent. It was as much as to say, do your worst, we do not fear you; we know whom we serve, and whom we have trusted. 4. Thus they left a testimony behind them, that they had had a fair offer made them of the grace of the gospel, which shall be proved against them in the day of judgment: This dust will prove that the preachers of the gospel had been among them, but were expelled by them: Thus Christ had ordered them to do, and for this reason, Matt. x. 14. Luke ix. 5. *when they left them, they came to Iconium*, not so much for safety, as for work.

3. What frame he left the new converts in at Antioch, ver. 52. The disciples, when they saw with what courage and cheerfulness Paul and Barnabas not only bore the indignities that were done them, but went on with their work notwithstanding, they were in like manner spirited: 1. They were very cheerful; one would have expected, that, when Paul and Barnabas were expelled out of their coasts, and, perhaps, forbidden to return upon pain of death, the disciples should have been full of grief, and full of fear, looking for no other but that, if the planters of Christianity go, the plantation would soon come to nothing; or, that it would be their turn next to be banished the country, and to them it would be more grievous, for it was their own; no, they were filled with joy in Christ, had such a satisfactory assurance of Christ's carrying on and perfecting his own work in them, and among them, and that either he would screen them from trouble, or bear them up under it, that all their fears were swallowed up in their believing joys. 2. They were very courageous; wonderfully animated with a holy resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever difficulties they met with; that seems especially to be meant by their being filled with the holy Ghost; for that is used of Peter's boldness, chap. iv. 8. and Stephen's, chap. vii. 55. and Paul's, chap. xiii. 9. The more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face the difficulties we meet with in the profession of godliness.

C H A P. XIV.

We have, in this chapter, a further account of the progress of the gospel, by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, among the Gentiles; it goes on conquering and to conquer; yet meeting with opposition, as before, among the unbelieving Jews. Here is, 1. Their successful preaching of the gospel for some time at Iconium, and their being driven thence by the violence of their persecutors, both Jews and Gentiles, and forced into the neighbouring countries, ver. 1,—7. 2. Their healing of a lame man at Lystra, and the civility veneration which the people conceived of them thereon, so that they had much ado to keep from running into an ecstacy, ver. 8,—18. 3. The outrage of the people against Paul, at the instigation of the Jews, the effect of which was, that they stoned him, as they thought, to death; but he was wonderfully restored to life again, ver. 19, 20. 4. The visit which Paul and Barnabas made to the churches which they had planted, to confirm them, and put them into order, ver. 21,—23. 5. Their return to Antioch, from whence they were sent forth, the good they did by the way, and the report they made to the church at Antioch of their expedition, and, if I may so say, of the campaign they had made, ver. 24,—28.

1. AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed. 2. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. 3. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testi-

testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4. But the multitude of the city was divided : and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them, 6. They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about : 7. And there they preached the gospel.

In these verses we have,

First, The preaching of *the gospel in Iconium*, whither the apostles were forced to retire from Antioch. As the blood of the martyrs has been *the seed of the church*, so the banishment of the confessors has helped to scatter that seed. Observe,

1. How they made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews, in their synagogues ; thither they went, not only as to a place of meeting, but as to a place of meeting with them, to whom, wherever they came, they were to apply themselves in the first place. Though the Jews at Antioch had used them barbarously, yet they did not therefore decline preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium, who, perhaps, might be better disposed. Let not those of any denomination be condemned in the gross, nor some suffer for others faults, but let us do good to those who have done evil to us : Though the blood-thirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek their soul, Prov. xxix. 10. seek the salvation of it.

2. How the apostles concurred herein ; notice is taken of this, that they went both together into the synagogue, to testify their unanimity, and mutual affection, that people might say, *see how they love one another*, and might think the better of Christianity, and that they might strengthen one another's hands, and confirm one another's testimony, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established. They did not go one one day, and another another ; or, one go at the beginning, and the other some time after ; but they went in both together.

Secondly, The success of their preaching there ; they so spake, that a great multitude, some hundreds, perhaps, if not thousands, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, that is, the Gentiles, believed. Observe here,

1. That the gospel was now preached to Jews and Gentiles together, and those of each denomination, that believed, came together into the church. In the close of the foregoing chapter it was preached first to the Jews, and some of them believed, then to the Gentiles, and some of them believed ; but here they are put together, being put upon the same level. The Jews have not so lost their preference as to be thrown behind, only the Gentiles are brought to stand upon even terms with them, both are reconciled to God in one body, Eph. ii. 16. and both together admitted into the church without distinction.

2. There seems to have been something remarkable in the manner of the apostles preaching here, which contributed to their success ; they so spake, that a great multitude believed ; so plainly, so convincingly, with such an evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and with such power ; they so spake, so warmly, so affectionately, and with such a manifest concern for the souls of men ; they so spake, as that one might perceive they were not only convinced, but filled with the things they spake of ; and that what they spake came from the heart, and therefore was likely to reach to the heart ; they so spake, so earnestly and seriously, so boldly and courageously, that they who heard them could not but say, *God was with them of a truth*. Yet the success was not to be attributed to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God, who made use of that means.

Thirdly, The opposition that their preaching met with there, and the trouble that was created them ; lest they should be puffed up with the multitude of their converts, there was given them this thorn in the flesh.

1. Unbelieving Jews were the first spring of their trouble here, as elsewhere, ver. 2. They stirred up the Gentiles. The influence which the gospel had upon many of the Gentiles, and their embracing of it, as it provoked some of the Jews to a holy jealousy, and stirred them up to receive the gospel too, Rom. xi. 14. so it provoked others of them to a wicked jealousy, and exasperated them against the gospel. Thus as good instructions, so good examples, which to some are a savour of life unto life, to others are a savour of death unto death : See 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

2. Disaffected Gentiles, irritated by the unbelieving Jews, were likely to be the instruments of their trouble ; the Jews, by false suggestions, which they were continually buzzing in the ears of the Gentiles, made their minds evil affected against the brethren, whom, of themselves, they were inclined to think favourably of. They not only took occasion in all companies, as it came in their way, but made it their business to go purposely to such as they had any acquaintance with, and said all that their wit or malice could invent, to beget in them not only a mean, but an ill opinion of Christianity, telling them how destructive it would certainly be to their pagan theology and worship ; and, for their parts, they would

rather be Gentiles, than Christians : Thus they soured and embittered their spirits against both the converters and the converted. The old serpent did, by their poisonous tongues, infuse his venom against the seed of the woman, into the minds of these Gentiles, and this was a root of bitterness in them bearing gall and wormwood. Those that are ill affected towards good people, it is no wonder if they wish ill to them, speak ill of them, and contrive ill against them ; it is all owing to ill will. *Εὐδαιμονία, they molested and vexed the minds of the Gentiles*, so some of the critics take it ; they were continually teasing them with their impertinent solicitations : The tools of persecutors have a dog's life, set on continually.

Fourthly, Their continuance in their work there, notwithstanding this opposition, and God's owning them in it, ver. 3. We have here,

1. The apostles working for Christ, faithfully and diligently, according to the trust committed to them ; because the minds of the Gentiles were evil affected against them, one would think that therefore they should have withdrawn, and hastened out of the way ; or, if they had preached, should have preached cautiously, for fear of giving farther provocation to those who were already enough enraged ; no, on the contrary, therefore they abode there a long time speaking boldly in the Lord : The more they perceived the spite and rancour of the town against the new converts, the more they were animated to go on in their work, and the more needful they saw it to continue among them, to confirm them in the faith, and to comfort them. They spake boldly, and were not afraid of giving offence to the unbelieving Jews. What God said to the prophet, with reference to the unbelieving Jews in his day, was now made good to the apostles, *I have made thy face strong against their faces*, Ezek. iii. 7, 8, 9. But observe what it was that animated them, they spake boldly in the Lord, in his strength, and trusting in him to bear them out, not depending upon any thing in themselves : They were strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

2. Christ working with the apostles, according to his promise, *Lo, I am with you always*. When they went on in his name and strength, he failed not to give testimony to the word of his grace. Note, 1. The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us, and the means of his good work in us : It is the word of Christ's grace, for it is in him alone that we find savour with God. 2. Christ himself has attested this word of grace, who is the Amen, the faithful Witness ; he hath assured us that it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it. As it was said in general concerning the first preachers of the gospel, that they had the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following, Mark xvi. 20. so it is said particularly concerning the apostles here, that the Lord confirmed their testimony in granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands, in the miracles they wrought in the kingdom of nature, as well as the wonders done by their word, in the greater miracles wrought on mens minds by the power of divine grace. The Lord was with them, while they were with him, and abundance of good was done.

Fifthly, The division which this occasioned in the city, ver. 4. The multitude of the city was divided into two parties, and both active and vigorous ; among the rulers and persons of rank, and among the common people, there were some that held with the unbelieving Jews, and others that held with the apostles ; Barnabas is here reckoned an apostle, though none of the twelve, nor called in that extraordinary manner that Paul was, because set apart by special designation of the holy Ghost to the service of the Gentiles. It seems, this business of the preaching of the gospel was so universally taken notice of with concern, that every person, even of the multitude of the city, was either for it, or against it ; none stood neuter : Either for us, or for our adversaries ; for God, or Baal ; for Christ, or Beelzebub.

1. We may here see the meaning of Christ's prediction, that he came not to send peace upon earth, but rather division, Luke xii. 51, 52, 53. If all would have given in unanimously into his measures, there had been universal concord ; and could men have agreed in that, there would have been no dangerous discord or disagreement in other things ; but disagreeing here, the breach was wide as the sea : Yet the apostles must not be blamed for coming to Iconium, because before they came the city was united, but now it was divided ; for it is better that part of the city go to heaven, than all to hell.

2. We may here take the measures of our expectations ; let us not think it strange if the preaching of the gospel occasion division, nor be offended at it ; it is better to be reproached and persecuted as dividers for swimming against the stream, than yield ourselves to be carried down the stream that leads to destruction : Let us hold with the apostles, and not fear them that hold with the Jews.

Sixthly, The attempt made upon the apostles by their enemies ; their evil affection against them broke out at length in violent outrages, ver. 5. Observe,

1. Who the plotters were ; both the Gentiles, and the Jews, with their rulers. The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, and yet united against Christians, like Herod and Pilate, Sadducees and Pharisees, against Christ, and like Gebal and Ammon, and Amalek of old, against Israel. If the church's enemies

can thus unite for its destruction, shall not its friends, laying aside all personal feuds, unite for its preservation?

2. What the plot was; having now got *the rulers* on their side, they doubted not but to carry their point, and their design was *to use the apostles despitefully*, to expose them to disgrace, and then *to stone them*, to put them to death; and thus they hoped to sink their cause; they aimed to take away both their reputation and their life, and that was all they had to lose, which they could take from them, for they had neither lands nor goods.

Seventhly, The deliverance of the apostles *out of the hands of those wicked and unreasonable men*, ver. 6, 7. They got away upon notice given them of the design against them, or the beginning of the attempt upon them, which *they were soon aware of*, and they made an honourable retreat (for it was not an inglorious flight) *to Lystra and Derbe*; and there,

1. They found safety; their persecutors in Iconium were for the present satisfied that *they were thrust out of their borders*, and pursued them no further: God hath shelters for his people in a storm; nay, he is, and will be himself *their hiding-place*.

2. They found work, and that was it they went for; when the door of opportunity was shut against *them at Iconium*, it was opened *at Lystra and Derbe*; to those cities they went, *and there, and in the region that lieth round about, they preached the gospel*. In times of persecution ministers may see cause to quit the spot, when yet they do not quit the work.

8. ¶ And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. 9. The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10. Said with a loud voice, Stand up right on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. 11. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lift up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. 13. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. 14. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15. And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 18. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

In these verses we have,

First, A miraculous cure wrought by Paul at Lystra, upon a cripple, that had been lame from his birth, such an one as was miraculously cured by Peter and John, *Acts* iii. 2. That introduced the gospel among the Jews, this among the Gentiles; both that and this, were designed to represent the impotency of all the children of men in spiritual things, they are lame from their birth, till the grace of God puts strength into them; for it was when we were yet *without strength*, that Christ died for the ungodly, Rom. v. 6. Observe here,

1. The deplorable case of the poor cripple, ver. 8. He was *impotent in his feet, disabled*, so the word is, to that degree that it was impossible he should set his foot to the ground, to lay any stress upon it: It was well known that he had been so *from his mother's womb*, and that he *never had walked*, or could *stand up*. We should take occasion from hence, to thank God for the use of our limbs; and those who are deprived of it, may observe that their case is not singular.

2. The expectation that was raised in him of a cure, ver. 9. He heard Paul preach, and it is likely was much affected with what he heard, believed the message was from heaven, and that the messengers having their commission thence, had a divine power going along with them, and were therefore able to cure him of his lameness. This Paul was aware of, by the Spirit of discerning that he had, and perhaps the shew of his countenance did in part witness for him; *Paul perceived that he had faith to be healed*; desired it, hoped for it, had such a thing in his thoughts; which it doth not appear that the lame man Peter healed had, for he expected no more than an alms: There was not found such great faith in Israel, as was among the Gentiles, Matt. viii. 10.

3. The cure wrought; *Paul perceiving that he had faith to be healed, brought the word and healed him*, Psalm cvii. 20. Note, God will not disappoint the desires that are of his own kindling, No. CII.

nor the hopes of his own raising. Paul spake to him *with a loud voice*, either because he was at some distance, or to shew that the true miracles wrought by the power of Christ, were far unlike the lying wonders wrought by deceivers, *that peeped, and muttered, and whispered*, Isa. viii. 19. God saith, *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth*, Isa. xlv. 19. Paul spoke to him *with a loud voice*, that the people about might take notice, and have their expectations raised of the effect. It doth not appear that this cripple was a beggar; it is said, ver. 8. *that he sat*, not that he sat begging: But we may imagine how melancholy it was to him to see other people walking about him, and himself disabled; and therefore how welcome Paul's word was to him, *Stand up right on thy feet*; help thyself, and God shall help thee; try whether thou hast strength, and thou shalt find that thou hast. Some copies read it, *I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, stand up right on thy feet*. It is certain that is implied, and, very probably, was expressed by Paul, and *power went along with this word*; for presently *he leaped and walked*; leaped up from the place where he sat, and not only stood up right, but, to shew that he was perfectly cured, and that immediately, he walked to and fro before them all. Herein the scripture was fulfilled, that when *the wilderness of the Gentile world is made to blossom as the rose, then shall the lame man leap as a hart*, Isa. xxxv. 1, 6. Those that by the grace of God are cured of their spiritual lameness, must shew it by leaping with a holy exultation, and walking in a holy conversation.

Secondly, The impression which this cure made upon *the people*, they were amazed at it, had never seen or heard the like, and fell into an ecstasy of wonder. Paul and Barnabas were strangers, exiles, refugees in their country; every thing concurred to make them mean and despicable, yet the working of this one miracle was enough to make them in the eyes of this people *truly great and honourable*, though the multitude of Christ's miracles could not screen him from the utmost contempt among *the Jews*. We find here,

1. The people take them for gods, ver. 11. *They lift up their voices* with an air of triumph, saying in their own language (for it was the common people that said it) *in the speech of Lycaonia*, which was a dialect of the Greek, *The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*: They imagined they were dropped down to them out of the clouds, and that they were some divine powers, no less than gods, though in the likeness of men. This notion of the thing agreed well enough with the pagan theology, and the fabulous account they had of the visits which *their gods* made to this lower world, and proud enough they were to think that they should have a visit made to them: They carried this notion so far here, that they pretended to tell which of *their gods they were*, according to the ideas their poets had given *them of the gods*, ver. 12. *They called Barnabas, Jupiter*; for if they will have him to be a god, it is as easy to make him *the prince of their gods as not*: It is likely, he was the senior, and the more portly, comely man, that had something of majesty in his countenance: And *Paul they called Mercury*, who was the messenger of the gods, that was sent on their errands; for Paul, though he had not *the presence that Barnabas had*, was the chief speaker, and had a greater command of language, and, perhaps, appeared to have something mercurial in his temper and genius: *Jupiter used to take Mercury along with him* (they said) and if he make a visit to their city, they will suppose he doth so now.

2. The priest thereupon prepares to do sacrifice to them, ver. 13. The temple of Jupiter was, it seems, before the gate of their city, as its protector and guardian; and the priest of that idol and temple hearing the people cry out thus, took the hint presently, and thought it was time for him to bestir himself to do his duty: Many a costly sacrifice he had offered to the image of Jupiter, but if Jupiter be among them himself, *in propria persona*, it concerns him to do him the utmost honours imaginable, and the people are ready to join with him in it. See how easily vain minds are carried away with a popular outcry! If the crowd give a shout, here is Jupiter; the priest of Jupiter takes the first hint, and offers his service presently! When Christ, the Son of God, came down, and appeared in the likeness of men, and did many, very many miracles, yet they were so far from doing sacrifice to him, that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice; *he was in the world, and the world knew him not*; he came to his own, and his own received him not; but Paul and Barnabas, upon the working of one miracle, are deified presently. The same power of the god of this world, which prejudiceth the carnal mind against truth, makes errors and mistakes to find easy admission, and both ways his turn is served. They brought oxen to be sacrificed to them, and garlands, with which to crown the sacrifices: These garlands were made up of flowers and ribbons; and they gilded the horns of the oxen they sacrificed.

So beasts for sacrifice do feed,
First to be crowned, and then to bleed.

Victimæ ad supplicium suginantur, hostiæ ad pœnam coronantur; so Octavius in *Minutius Felix*.

Thirdly, Paul and Barnabas protest against this undue respect paid them, and with much ado prevent it. Many of the heathen emperors called themselves *gods*, and took a pride in having divine honours paid them; but Christ's ministers, though real benefactors to mankind, while they only pretended to be so, refused those honours when they were tendered: Whose successor therefore he is who *sits in the temple of God*, and shews that he is *god*, (2 Cor. ii. 4.) and who is adored as *our lord god*, the pope, it is easy to say. Observe,

1. The holy indignation which Paul and Barnabas conceived at this: *When they heard this, they rent their clothes*: We do not find that they rent their clothes when the people vilified them, and spake of stoning them; they could bear that without disturbance; but when they deified them, and spake of worshipping them, they could not bear it, but *rent their clothes*, as being more concerned for God's honour than their own.

2. The pains they took to prevent it: They did not connive at it, nor say, if people will be deceived, let them be deceived, much less suggest to themselves and one another, that it might contribute both to the safety of their persons, and the success of their ministry, if they suffered the people to continue in this mistake, and so they might make a good hand of an ill thing: No, God's truth needs not the service of man's lye, Christ had put honour enough upon them in making them apostles, they needed not assume either the honour of princes, or the honour of *gods*; they appeared with much more magnificent titles, when they were called *the ambassadors of Christ*, and *the stewards of the mysteries of God*, than when they were called *Jupiter*, and *Mercury*.

Let us see how they prevented it,

(1.) They ran in among the people, as soon as they heard of it, and would not so much as stay a while to see what the people would do. Their running in like servants among the people, shewed that they were far from looking upon themselves as *gods*, or taking state upon them; they did not stand still expecting honours to be done them, but plainly declined them by thrusting themselves into the crowd: They ran in, as men in earnest, with as much concern as Aaron ran in between the living and the dead, when the plague was begun.

(2.) They reasoned with them, crying out, that all might hear, *Sirs, why do ye these things?* Why do ye go about to make *gods* of us? It is the most absurd thing you can do; for,

1. Our nature will not admit it, *we also are men of like passions with yours*; *ἡμετέραν φύσιν*, it is the same word that is used concerning Elias, *Jam. v. 17.* where we render it, *subject to like passions as we are*. *We are men*, and therefore you wrong yourselves if you expect that from us which is to be had in God only; and you wrong God if you give that honour to us, or to any other man, which is to be given to God only: We not only have such bodies as you see, but *are of like passions with you*, have *hearts fashioned alike as other men*, Psalm xxxiii. 15. for, *as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man*, Prov. xxvii. 19. We are naturally subject to the same infirmities of the human nature, and liable to the same calamities of the human life; not only men, but sinful men, and suffering men, and therefore will not be deified.

2. Our doctrine is directly against it: Must we be added to the number of your *gods*, whose business it is to abolish the *gods* you have? *We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God*: If we should suffer this, we should confirm you in that which it is our business to convert you from: And so they take this occasion to shew them how just and necessary it was that they should turn to God from idols, 1 Thess. i. 9. When they preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had nothing to do but to preach the grace of God in Christ, and needed not, as the prophets, in dealing with their fathers, to preach against idolatry; but when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must rectify their mistakes in natural religion, and bring them off from the gross corruptions of that.

See here what they preached to the Gentiles:

(1.) That the *gods* which they and their fathers worshipped, and all the ceremonies of their worship of them, were *vanities*, idle things, unreasonable, unprofitable, which no rational account could be given of, nor any real advantage gained from. Idols are often called *vanities* in the Old Testament, *Deut. xxxii. 21.* 1 Kings xvi. 13. *Jer. xiv. 22.* *An idol is nothing in the world*, 1 Cor. viii. 4. it is not at all what it is pretended to be, it is a cheat, it is a counterfeit, it deceives those that trust to it, and expect relief from it: Therefore turn from these *vanities*, turn from them with abhorrence and detestation, as Ephraim did, *Hos. xiv. 8.* *What have I to do any more with idols?* I will never again be thus imposed upon.

(2.) That the God whom they would have them turn to is the living God: They had hitherto worshipped dead images, that were utterly unable to help them, *Isa. xlv. 9.* or (as they now attempted) dying men, that would soon be disabled to help them; but now they are persuaded to worship a living God, who hath life in himself, and life for us, and lives for evermore.

(3.) That this God is the creator of the world, the fountain of all being and power; he made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein; even those things which you worship as

gods, so that he is the God of your *gods*; you worship *gods* which you made, the creatures of your own fancy, and the work of your own hands; we call you to worship the God that made you and all the world; worship the true God, and cheat not yourselves with pretenders; worship the sovereign Lord of all, and disparage not yourselves in bowing down to his creatures and subjects.

(4.) That the world owed it to his patience that he had not destroyed them long ere this for their idolatry, *ver. 16.* *In times past*, for many ages, unto this day, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. These idolaters, that were called from the service of other *gods*, might think, had they not served these *gods* hitherto, and their fathers before them, time out of mind? and why may they not as well go on to serve them still? No, your serving of them was a trial of God's patience, and it was a miracle of mercy that you were not cut off for it. But though he did not destroy you for it, while you were in ignorance and knew no better, *Acts xvii. 30.* yet now he hath sent his gospel into the world, and by it has made a clear discovery of himself and his will to all nations, and not to the Jews only; if yet you continue in your idolatry, he will not bear with you as he has done. All the nations that had not the benefit of divine revelation, that is, all but the Jews, he suffered to walk in their own ways, for they had nothing to check them, or controul them, but their own consciences, their own thoughts, *Rom. ii. 15.* no scriptures, no prophets, and then they were the more excusable if they mistook their way; but now God hath sent a revelation into the world, which is to be published to all nations, the case is altered. We may understand it as a judgment upon all nations, that God suffered them to walk in their own ways, gave them up to their own hearts lusts; but now the time is come when the veil of the covering spread over all nations should be taken off, *Isa. xxv. 7.* and now you will no longer be excused in these vanities, but must turn from them. Note, 1. God's patience with us hitherto should lead us to repentance, and not encourage us to presume upon the continuance of it, while we continue to provoke him. 2. Our having done ill while we were in ignorance, will not bear us out in doing ill when we are better taught.

(5.) That even then when they were not under the direction and correction of the word of God, yet they might have known, and should have known to do better by the works of God, *ver. 17.* Though the Gentiles had not the statutes and judgments that the Jews had to witness for God against all pretenders, no tables of testimony, or tabernacle of testimony, yet he left not himself without witness; besides the witness for God within them, the dictates of natural conscience, they had witnesses for God round about them, the bounty of common providence. Their having no scriptures did in part excuse them, and therefore God did not destroy them for their idolatry, as he did the Jewish nation; but that did not wholly excuse them, but that, notwithstanding that, they were highly criminal, and deeply guilty before God; for there were other witnesses for God, sufficient to inform them, that he, and he only, is to be worshipped; and that to him they owed all their services, from whom they received all their comforts; and therefore were guilty of the highest injustice and ingratitude imaginable in alienating them from him: God having not left himself without witness, has not left us without a guide, and so has left us without excuse; for whatever is a witness for God, is a witness against us, if we give that glory to any other, which is due to him only.

1. The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God, for they are all dispensed wisely, and with design: The rain, and fruitful seasons, could not come by chance; nor are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain; neither can the heavens, of themselves, give showers, *Jer. xiv. 22.* all the powers of nature witness to us a sovereign power in the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend: It is not the heaven that gives us rain, but God that gives us rain from heaven; he is the Father of the rain, *Job xxxviii. 28.*

2. The benefit we have by these bounties witness to us, that we ought to make our acknowledgments, not to the creatures, who are made serviceable to us, but to the Creator, who makes them so: He left not himself without witness, in that he did good. God seems to reckon the instances of his goodness to be more pregnant, cogent proofs of his title to our homage and adoration, than the evidences of his greatness; for his goodness is his glory: The earth is full of his goodness; his tender mercies are over all his works; and therefore they praise him, Psalm cxlv. 9, 10. God doth us good, in preserving to us his air to breathe in, his ground to go upon, the light of his sun to see by; but, because the most sensible instance of the goodness of providence to each of us in particular is that of the daily provision made by it of meat and drink for us, the apostle chooseth to insist upon that, and shews how God doth us good, 1. In preparing it for us, and that by a long train of causes which depend upon him as the first cause; the heavens bear the earth, the earth bears the corn, and wine, and oil, and they bear Jerezeel, *Hosea ii. 21, 22.* He doth us good, in giving us rain from heaven; rain for us to drink; for if there were no rain, there would be no springs of water, and we should soon die for thirst; rain for our land to drink, for our meat as well as drink we have from the rain; in giving us that he gives us fruitful seasons:

sons: If the heavens be as brass, the earth will soon be as iron, Lev. xxvi. 4. That is the river of God which greatly enricheth the earth, and by it God prepares us corn, Psalm lxxv. 9, 10, 11. Of all the common operations of providence, the heathen chose to form their notion of the supreme God by that which speaks terror, and is proper to strike an awe of him upon us, and that was the thunder; and therefore they called *Jupiter the thunderer*, and represented him with a thunderbolt in his hand; and it appears, by Psalm xxix. 3. that that ought not to be overlooked; but the apostle here, to engage us to worship God, sets before us his beneficence, that we may have good thoughts of him in every thing wherein we have to do with him; may love him, and delight in him, as one that doth good, doth good to us, doth good to all, in giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; and if at any time rain be withheld, or the seasons unfruitful, we may thank ourselves, it is our sin that turns away these good things from us, which were coming to us, and stops the current of God's favours. 2. In giving us the comforts of it; it is he that fills our hearts with food and gladness: God is rich in mercy to all, Rom. x. 12. he gives us richly all things to enjoy, 1 Tim. vi. 17. is not only a benefactor, but a bountiful one; not only gives us the things we need, but gives us to enjoy them, Eccl. ii. 24. he fills our hearts with food, i. e. he gives us food to our hearts content, or according to our hearts desire; not merely for necessity, but plenty, dainty, and variety. Even those nations that had lost the knowledge of him, and worshipped other gods, yet he filled their houses, filled their mouths, filled their bellies (Job xxii. 18. Psalm xvii. 14.) with good things: The Gentiles, that lived without God in the world, yet lived upon God; which Christ urgeth as a reason why we should do good to those that hate us, Matt. v. 44, 45. Those heathen had their hearts filled with food, that was their felicity and satisfaction, they desired no more; but these things will not fill the soul, Ezek. vii. 19. nor will those that know how to value their own souls be satisfied with them; but the apostles put themselves in as sharers in the divine beneficence; we must all own that God fills our hearts with food and gladness; not only food that we may live, but gladness that we may live cheerfully; to him we owe it that we do not all our days eat in sorrow. Note, We must thank God, not only for our food, but for our gladness; that he gives us leave to be cheerful, cause to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful: And if our hearts be filled with food and gladness, they ought to be filled with love and thankfulness, and enlarged in duty and obedience, Deut. xiii. 10. xxviii. 47.

Lastly, The success of this prohibition which the apostles gave to the people, ver. 18. By these sayings, with much ado, they restrained the people from doing sacrifice to them; so strongly were idolaters set upon their idolatry! It was not enough for the apostles to refuse to be deified, that would be construed only a pang of modesty, but they resented it, they shew them the evil of it, and all little enough, for they scarce restrained them from it; and some of them were ready to blame the priest that he did not go on with his business notwithstanding: We may see here what gave rise to the pagan idolatry, it was terminating those regards in the instruments of our comfort, which should have passed through them to the author; Paul and Barnabas have cured a cripple, and therefore they deify them, instead of glorifying God for giving them such power; which should make us very cautious that we do not either give that honour to another, or take it to ourselves, which is due to God only.

19. ¶ And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. 20. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 23. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. 24. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: 26. And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled. 27. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28. And there they abode long time with the disciples.

We have here a further account of the services and sufferings of Paul and Barnabas.

First, How Paul was stoned and left for dead, but miraculously came to himself again, ver. 19, 20. they fell upon Paul rather than Barnabas, because Paul being the chief speaker, galled and vexed them more than Barnabas did. Now observe here,

1. How the people were incensed against Paul; not by any injury they pretended he had done against them, if they took it for an affront that he would not let them misplace divine honours upon him, when they considered themselves they would easily forgive him that wrong. But there came certain Jews from Antioch, hearing, it is likely, and vexed to hear what respect was shewed to Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, and they incensed the people against them, as factious, seditious, dangerous persons, not fit to be harboured. See how restless the rage of the Jews was against the gospel of Christ; they could not bear that it should have footing any where.

2. To what degree they were incensed by these barbarous Jews; they irritated them to that degree, that the mob rose and stoned Paul, not by a judicial sentence, but in a popular tumult; they threw stones at him, with which they knocked him down, and then drew him out of the city, as one not fit to live in it, or drew him out upon a sledge, or in a cart, to bury him, supposing he had been dead. So strong is the bent of the corrupt and carnal heart to that which is evil, even in contrary extremes, that as it is with great difficulty that men are restrained from evil on one side, so it is with great ease that they are persuaded to evil on the other side. See how fickle and mutable the minds of carnal worldly people are, that do not know and consider things! Those that but the other day would have treated the apostles as more than men, now treat them as worse than brutes, as the worst of men, as the worst of malefactors. To day *hosanna*, to morrow *crucify*; to day sacrificed to, to morrow sacrificed: As we have an instance of a change the other way, Acts xxviii. This man is a murderer, ver. 4. no doubt he is a god, ver. 6. popular breath turns like the wind. If Paul would have been Mercury, he might have been enthroned, nay, he might have been enshrined; but if he will be a faithful minister of Christ he shall be stoned, and thrown out of the city. Thus they who easily submit to strong delusions, hate to receive the truth in the love of it.

3. How he was deliver'd by the power of God. When he was drawn out of the city, the disciples stood round about him, ver. 20. It seems there were some here at Lystra that became disciples, that found the mean between deifying the apostles, and rejecting them; and even these new converts had courage to own Paul, when he was thus run down, though they had reason enough to fear that the same that stoned him, would stone them for owning him. They stood round about him, as a guard to him against the further outrage of the people; stood about him to see whether he were alive or dead; and all of a sudden he rose up; though he was not dead yet he was ill crushed and bruised, no doubt, and fainted away; he was in a *deliquium*, so that it was not without a miracle that he came so soon to himself, and was so well as to be able to go into the city. Note, God's faithful servants, though they may be brought within a step of death, and may be looked upon as dead, both by friends and enemies, shall not die as long as he has work for them to do. They are cast down, but not destroyed, 2 Cor. iv. 9.

Secondly, How they went on with their work, notwithstanding the opposition they met with, all the stones they threw at Paul will not beat him off from his work. They drew him out of the city, ver. 19. but as one that set them at defiance, he came into the city again, to shew that he did not fear them; none even of these things move him. However, their being persecuted here is a known indication to them to seek for opportunities of usefulness elsewhere, and therefore for the present they quit Lystra.

And, 1. They went to break up and sow fresh ground at Derbe; thither the next day Paul and Barnabas departed, a city not far off, there they preached the gospel, there they taught many, ver. 21. And it should seem that Timothy was of that city, and was one of the disciples that now attended Paul, had met him at Antioch, and accompanied him in all this circuit, for, with reference to this story, Paul tells him how fully he had known the afflictions he endured at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. Nothing is recorded that happened at Derbe.

2. They returned and went over their work again, watering what they had sown; having stayed as long as they thought fit at Derbe, they came back to Lystra, to Iconium and Antioch, the cities where they had preached, ver. 21. Now, as we have had a very instructive account of the methods they took in laying the foundation, and beginning the good work, so here we have the like of their building upon that foundation, and carrying on that good work. Let us see what they did.

(1.) They confirmed the souls of the disciples, i. e. they inculcated that upon them which was proper to confirm them, ver. 22. young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them, their old acquaintance beg they will not leave them, those that they look upon to be wiser than they, set before them the absurdity, indecency, and danger of a change, they are allured by the prospect of preferment, to stick to the traditions of their fathers, they are frightened with the danger of swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of making a retreat in time; but the

the apostles come and tell them that *this is the true grace of God wherein they stand*, and therefore they must stand to it, that there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of him; that whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be they shall be abundantly recompensed. And this *confirms the souls of the disciples*, it fortifies their pious resolutions in the strength of Christ, to stick to Christ whatever it cost them. Note, 1. Those that are converted need to be confirmed, that are planted need to be rooted. Ministers work is to establish faints, as well as to awaken sinners. *Non minor est virtus quam quærere parta tueri.* Those that were instructed in the truth, must know the certainty of the things in which they have been instructed; and those that are resolved must be fixed in their resolutions. 2. True confirmation is confirmation of the soul; it is not binding the body by severe penalties on apostates, but binding the soul; the best ministers can do that only, by pressing those things which are proper to bind the soul, it is the grace of God, and nothing less that can effectually confirm the souls of the disciples, and prevent their apostasy.

(2.) They exhorted them to continue in the faith; or, (as it may be read) they encouraged them. They told them it was both their duty and interest to persevere; to abide in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Note, Those that are in the faith, are concerned to continue in the faith, notwithstanding all the temptations they may be under to desert it, from the smiles or frowns of this world. And it is requisite they should often be exhorted to do so. They that are continually surrounded with temptations to apostasy, have need to be continually attended with pressing exhortations to perseverance.

(3.) That which they insisted most upon was, that *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* Not only they must, but we must; it must be counted upon, that all that will go to heaven must expect tribulation and persecution in their way thither. But is this the way to confirm the souls of the disciples, and to engage them to continue in the faith? One would think it should rather shock them, and make them weary. No, as the matter is fairly stated and taken entire, it will help to confirm them, and fix them for Christ. It is true they will meet with tribulation, with much tribulation, that is the worst of it: But, then, 1. It is so appointed, they must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered; he that has the sovereign disposal of us, has determined it to be our lot, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; and he that has the sovereign command over us, has determined this to be our duty, that all that will be Christ's disciples must take up the cross, so that when we gave up our names to Jesus Christ, it was what we agreed to, when we sat down and counted the cost, if we reckoned right it was that we counted upon, so that if tribulation and persecution arose because of the word, it is but what we had notice of before, it must be so, *he performeth the thing that is appointed for us*. The matter is fixed unalterably, and *shall the rock be for us removed out of its place?* 2. It is the lot of the leaders in Christ's army as well as of the soldiers. It is not only you, but we, that (if it be thought a hardship) are subject to it, therefore as your own sufferings must not be a stumbling to you, so neither must ours, see 1 Thes. iii. 3. *Let none be moved by our afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.* As Christ did not put the apostles upon any harder service than what he underwent before them, so neither did the apostles put the ordinary Christians. 3. It is true we must count upon much tribulation, but this is encouraging that we shall get through it; we shall not be lost and perish in it. It is a red sea, but the Lord has opened a way through it, for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. We must go down to trouble, but we shall come up again. 4. We shall not only get through it, but get through it into the kingdom of God; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true we must go by the cross, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside or turn back, we shall go to the crown, and the believing prospect of that will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.

(4.) They ordained them elders, or presbyters, in every church. Now at this second visit they settled them in some order, formed them into religious societies under the conduct of a settled ministry, and settled that distinction between them that are taught in the word, and them that teach. 1. Every church had its governours, or presidents, whose office it was to pray with the members of the church, and to preach to them in their solemn assemblies, to administer all gospel ordinances to them, and to take the oversight of them, to instruct the ignorant, warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and to convince gainstayers. It is requisite that every particular should have one or more such to preside in it. 2. Those governors were then elders, that had in their qualification the wisdom and gravity of seniors, and had in their commission the authority and command of seniors: Not to make new laws; that is the prerogative of the prince, the great lawgiver, (the government of the church is an absolute monarchy, and the legislative power intirely in Christ) but to see to the observance and execution of the laws Christ has made; and so far they are to be obeyed and submitted to. 3. These elders were ordained. Those that knew the persons that were pro-

posed, or proposed themselves (whether the apostles or the people put them up) their qualifications were judged of by the apostles, as most fit to judge, and they themselves having devoted themselves were solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry, and bound to it. 4. These elders were ordained to them, to the disciples, to their service, for their good. Those that are in the faith have need to be built up in it, and have need of the elders help therein, the pastors and teachers, who are to edify the body of Christ.

5. By prayer joined with fasting they commended them to the Lord, to the Lord Jesus, on whom they believed. Note, 1. When persons are brought to believe, and that sincerely, yet ministers care concerning them is not then over; there is need of watching over them still, instructing and admonishing them still, there is still that lacking in their faith which needs to be perfected. 2. The ministers that take most care of them that believe must after all commend them to the Lord, and put them under the protection and conduct of his grace, *Lord keep them through thine own name.* To his custody they must commit themselves, and their ministers must commit them. 3. It is by prayer that they must be commended to the Lord; Christ in his prayer, John xvii. commended his disciples to his Father, *thine they were, and thou gavest them me, Father keep them.* 4. It is a great encouragement to us in commending the disciples to the Lord, that we can say, it is he in whom they believed, we commit them to him who have committed themselves to him, and who know they have believed in one who is able to keep what they and we have committed to him against that day, 2 Tim. i. 12. 5. It is good to join fasting with prayer, in token of our humiliation for sin, and in order to the adding of vigour to our prayers. 6. When we are parting with our friends, the best farewell is to commend them to the Lord, and to leave them with him.

2. They went on preaching the gospel in other places, where they had been, but as it should seem had not made so many converts as that now at their return they could form them into churches; therefore thither they came to pursue and carry on conversion work. From Antioch they passed throughout Pisidia, the province in which that Antioch stood, thence they came into the province of Pamphilia, the head city of which was Perga, where they had been before, chap. xiii. 13. and came thither again to preach the word, ver. 25. making a second offer, to see if they were now better disposed than they were before, to receive the gospel. What success they had there we are not told, but that from thence they went down to Attalia, a city of Pamphilia, on the sea-coast. They stayed not long at a place, but wherever they came endeavoured to lay a foundation, which might afterwards be built upon, and to sow the seeds which would in time produce a great increase. Now Christ's parables were explained, in which he resembled the kingdom of heaven to a little leaven, which in time leavened the whole lump; to a grain of mustard seed, which though very inconsiderable at first, grew to a great tree; and to the seed which a man sowed in his ground, and it sprung up he knew not how.

Thirdly, How they at length came back to Antioch, in Syria, from whence they were sent forth upon this expedition. From Attalia they came by Sea to Antioch, ver. 26. And we are here told,

1. Why they came thither; because from thence they had been recommended to the grace of God, and such a value did they put upon a solemn recommendation to the grace of God, though they had themselves a great interest in heaven, that they never thought they could shew respect enough to those who had so recommended them. They having recommended them to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled, now they had fulfilled it, they thought they owed them an account of it, that they might help them by their praises, as they done by their prayers.

2. What account they gave them of their negotiation, ver. 27. They gathered the church together; it is probable the Christians at Antioch were more than ordinarily met or could meet in one place, but on this occasion they called together the leading men of them; as the heads of the tribes are often called the congregation of Israel, so the ministers and principal members of the church at Antioch are called the church; or, perhaps, as many of the people as the place would hold came together on that occasion. Or, some met one time, or in one place, and others at another. But when they had them together they gave them an account of two things:

1. Of the tokens they had had of the divine presence with them in their labours. They rehearsed all that God had done with them. They did not tell what they had done, that would have favoured of vainglory, but of what God had done with them, and by them. Note, The praise of all that little good we do at any time must be ascribed to God; for, it is he that not only worketh in us both to will and to do, but then worketh with us to make what we do successful. God's grace can do any thing without ministers preaching, but ministers preaching, even Paul's, can do nothing without God's grace, and the operations of that grace must be acknowledged in the efficacy of the word.

2. Of the fruit of their labours among the heathen; they told how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles, had not only ordered them to be invited to the gospel feast, but had inclined the hearts of many of them to accept the invitation. Note, 1. There is no entering into the kingdom of Christ but by the door of faith; we must firmly believe in Christ or we have no part in him. 2. It

is God that opens the door of faith, that opens to us the truths we are to believe, opens our hearts to receive them, and makes this a wide door, and an effectual into the church of Christ.

3. We have reason to be thankful that God has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, hath both sent them his gospel, which is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, Rom. xvi. 26. And hath also given them hearts to entertain the gospel. Thus the gospel was spread, and it shined more and more, and none was able to shut this door which God had opened; not all the powers of hell and earth.

3. How they disposed of themselves for the present; there they abode long time with the disciples, ver. 28. longer than, perhaps, at first they intended; not because they feared the enemies, but because they loved their friends, and were loth to part from them.

CHAP. XV.

Hitherto we have, with a great deal of pleasure, attended the apostles in their glorious travels for the propagating of the gospel in foreign parts; have seen the bounds of the church enlarged, by the accession both of Jews and Gentiles to it; and thanks be to that God who always caused them to triumph! We left them in the close of the foregoing chapter reposing themselves at Antioch, and edifying the church there with the rehearsal of their experiences, and it is pity they should ever be otherwise employed; but in this chapter we find other work, nothing so pleasant, cut out for them: The Christians and ministers are engaged in controversy, and they that should have been now busied in enlarging the dominions of the church, have as much as they can do to compose the divisions of it; when they should have been making war upon the devil's kingdom, they have much ado to keep the peace in Christ's kingdom. Yet that occurrence and the record of it, is of great use to the church, both for warning to us to expect such unhappy discords among Christians, and direction to us what method to take for the accommodating of them. Here is, (1.) A controversy raised at Antioch by the judaizing teachers, who would have the believing Gentiles brought under the yoke of circumcision and the ceremonial law, ver. 1, 2. (2.) A consultation had with the church at Jerusalem about this matter, and the sending of delegates thither for that purpose, which occasioned the starting of the same question there, ver. 2, 5. (3.) An account of what passed in the Synod that was convened upon this occasion, ver. 6. What Peter said, ver. 7, 11. What Paul and Barnabas discoursed of, ver. 12. And lastly, what James proposed for the settling of this matter, ver. 13, 21. (4.) The result of this debate, and the circular letter that was written to the Gentile converts, directing them how to govern themselves with respect to the Jews, ver. 23, 29. (5.) The delivering of this determination to the church at Antioch, and the satisfaction it gave them, ver. 30, 35. (6.) A second expedition designed by Paul and Barnabas to preach to the Gentiles, in which they quarrelled about their assistant, and parted upon it, one steering one course, and the other another, ver. 36, 41.

1. **A**ND certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. 3. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice, and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. 5. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

When things go on very smoothly and pleasantly in a state, or in a church, yet it is folly to be secure, and to think the mountain stands strong, and cannot be moved; some uneasiness or other will arise which is not foreseen, cannot be prevented, but must be prepared for. If ever there was a heaven upon earth, sure it was in the church at Antioch at this time, when there were so many excellent ministers there, and blessed Paul among them building up that church in their most holy faith: But here we have their peace disturbed, and differences arising. Here is,

First, A new doctrine started among them, which occasioned this division, obliging the Gentile converts to submit to circumcision and the ceremonial law, ver. 1. Many that had been proselytes to the Jewish religion, became Christians, and they would have such as were proselyted to the Christian religion, to become Jews.

1. The persons that urged this, were certain men which came down from Judea; some think, such as had been of the Pharisees, ver. 5. or, perhaps, of those priests which were obedient to the faith,

chap. vi. 7. They came from Judea, pretending, perhaps, to be sent by the apostles at Jerusalem, at least, to be countenanced by them. Having a design to spread their notions, they came to Antioch, because that was the head quarters of those that preached to the Gentiles, and the rendezvous of the Gentile converts; and if they could but make an interest there, this leaven would soon be diffused to all the churches of the Gentiles. They insinuated themselves into an acquaintance with the brethren, pretended to be very glad that they had embraced the Christian faith and congratulated their conversion; but tell them, yet one thing they lack; they must be circumcised. Note, Those that are never so well taught, have need to stand upon their guard, that they be not untaught again, or ill-taught.

2. The position they laid down, the thesis they gave was this, that except the Gentiles, who turned Christians, were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and thereby obliged themselves to all the observances of the ceremonial law, they could not be saved. As to this:

1. Many of the Jews who embraced the faith of Christ, yet continued very zealous for the law, Acts xxi. 20. They knew it was from God, and its authority was sacred; valued it for its antiquity, had been bred up in the observance of it, and, it is probable, had been often devoutly affected in their attendance on those observances; they therefore kept them up after they were by baptism admitted into the Christian church; kept up the distinction of meats, and used the ceremonial purifyings from ceremonial pollutions, attended the temple service, and celebrated the feasts of the Jews: Herein they were connived at, because the prejudices of education are not to be got over all at once, and in a few years the mistake would be effectually rectified by the destruction of the temple, and the total dissolution of the Jewish church; by which the observation of the Mosaic ritual, would become utterly impracticable. But this did not suffice them, that they were herein indulged themselves, they must have the Gentile converts brought under the same obligations which they continued under. Note, There is a strange proneness in us to make our own opinion and practice, a rule and a law to every body else; to judge of all about us by our standard, and to conclude, that because we do well, all do wrong, that do not do just as we do.

2. Those Jews who believed that Christ was the Messiah, as they could not get clear of their affection to the law, so they could not get clear of the notions they had of the Messiah, that he should set up a temporal kingdom in favour of the Jewish nation, should make that illustrious and victorious; it was a disappointment to them that there was as yet nothing done towards this in the way they expected: But now they hear that the doctrine of Christ is received among the Gentiles, and his kingdom begins to be set up in the midst of them, if they can but persuade those that embrace Christ, to embrace the law of Moses too, they hope their point will be gained, the Jewish nation will be made as considerable as they can wish, though in another way; and therefore by all means let the brethren be pressed to be circumcised and keep the law; and then with our religion, our dominion will be extended, and we shall in a little time be able to shake off the Roman yoke, and not only so, but to put it on the necks of our neighbours, and so shall have such a kingdom of the Messiah as we promised ourselves. Note, Those who have wrong notions of the kingdom of Christ, it is no wonder if they take wrong measures for the advancement of it, and such as really tend to the destruction of it, as this here.

3. The controversy about the circumcising of the Gentile proselytes had been on foot among the Jews long before this. This is observed by Dr. Whitby out of Josephus, Antiq. l. xx. c. ii. That when Izates the son of Helen, queen of Adiabene, embraced the Jews religion, Ananias declared he might do it without circumcision; but Eleazar maintained, that it was a great impiety to remain uncircumcised. And when two eminent Gentiles fled to Josephus (as he relates in the history of his own life) the zealots among the Jews were urgent for their circumcision; but Josephus dissuaded them from insisting upon it. Such has been the difference in all ages between bigotry and moderation.

4. It is observable, what a mighty stress they laid upon it; they do not only say, you ought to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, and it will be good service to the kingdom of the Messiah, if you be; and will best accommodate matters between you and the Jewish converts, and we shall take it very kindly if you will, and shall converse the more familiarly with you; but except you be circumcised you cannot be saved. If you be not herein of our mind and way, you will never go to heaven, and therefore of course must go to hell. Note, It is common for proud imposers to enforce their own inventions under pain of damnation, and to tell people, unless they believe just as they would have them believe, and do just as they would have them do, they cannot be saved, it is impossible they should; not only their case is hazardous, but it is desperate. Thus the Jews tell the brethren, that except they be of their church, and come into their communion, and conform to the ceremonies of their worship, though otherwise good men and believers in Christ, yet they cannot be saved; salvation itself cannot save them. None are in Christ, but they that are within their pale. We ought to

See ourselves well warranted by the word of God before we say, except you do so and so, *you cannot be saved.*

Secondly, The opposition which Paul and Barnabas gave to this schismatical notion, which engrossed salvation to the Jews, now Christ had opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles, *ver. 2. They had no small dissension and disputation with them.* They would by no means yield to this doctrine; but appeared and argued publickly against it.

1. As *faithful servants of Christ*, they would not see *his truths betrayed*; they knew that Christ came to free us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and to take down that wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and unite them both in himself, and therefore cannot bear to hear of circumcising the Gentile converts, when their instructions were only to baptize them. The Jews would unite with the Gentiles, that is, they would have them to conform in every thing to their rites, and then, and not till then, they will look upon them as their brethren; and no thanks to them. But this not being the way in which Christ designed to unite them, it is not to be admitted.

2. As *spiritual fathers* to the Gentile converts, they would not see their *liberties encroached upon*; they had told them, that *if they believed in Jesus Christ*, they should be *saved*; and now to be told, that that was not enough to save them, except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses; this was such a discouragement to them at setting out, and would be such a stumbling-block in their way, as might almost tempt them to think of returning into Egypt again; and therefore they set themselves against it.

Thirdly, The expedient pitched upon for the preventing of the mischief of this dangerous notion, and the silencing of those that vented it, and the quieting of the minds of the people, with reference to it. They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and some others of their number, should *go to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders, concerning this doubt.* Not that the church at Antioch had any doubt concerning it, they knew the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but they sent the case to Jerusalem.

1. Because those who taught this doctrine came from Jerusalem, and pretended to have directions from the apostles there, to urge circumcision upon the Gentile converts; it was therefore very proper to send to Jerusalem about it, to know if they had any such direction from the church there. And it was soon found to be all wrong, which yet pretended to be of apostolical right. It was true that these *went out from them*, *ver. 24.* but they never went with any such orders from them.

2. Because those who were taught this doctrine, would be the better confirmed in their opposition to it, and in the less danger of being shocked and disturbed by it, if they were sure that *the apostles and elders at Jerusalem* (which was that Christian church, that of all others retained the most affection to the law of Moses) were against it; and if they could but have that under their hands, it would be the likeliest means to silence and shame these incendiaries, who had pretended to have it from them.

3. Because the apostles at Jerusalem were fittest to be consulted in a point yet not fully settled, and being most eminent for an infallible spirit, peculiar to them as apostles, their decision would be likely to end the controversy. And it is the subtilty and malice of the great enemy of the church's peace, that it appears by Paul's frequent complaints of these *Judaizing teachers*, these *false apostles*, these *deceitful workers*, these enemies of the cross of Christ, that it had not that effect.

Fourthly, Their journey to Jerusalem upon this errand, *ver. 3.* Where we find,

1. That they were honoured at parting; *they were brought on their way by the church*; which was then much used as a token of respect to useful men, and is directed to be done *after a godly sort*, 3 John 6. Thus the church shewed their favour to them who witnessed against these encroachments on the liberties of the Gentile converts, and stood up for them.

2. That they did good as they went along; they were men that would not lose time, and therefore visited the churches *by the way*; they passed through Phoenice and Samaria, and as they went *declared the conversion of the Gentiles*, and what wonderful success the gospel had had among them; which *caused great joy to all the brethren.* Note, The progress of the gospel is, and ought to be, a matter of great joy. *All the brethren*, the faithful brethren in Christ's family rejoice when more are born into the family; for the family will be never the poorer for the multitude of its children. In Christ and heaven there is portion enough, and inheritance enough for them all.

Fifthly, Their hearty welcome at Jerusalem, *ver. 9.*

1. The good entertainment their friends gave them; they were *received of the church, and of the apostles and elders*, were embraced as brethren, and had audience as messengers of the church at Antioch, they received them with all possible expressions of love and friendship.

2. The good entertainment they gave their friends; they *declared all things that God had done with them*; gave them an account of the success of their ministry among the Gentiles, not what *they had done*, but what God had *done with them*; what he had by his grace *in them* enabled them *to do*; and what he had by his grace

in their hearers, enabled them *to receive.* As they *went* they had *planted*, as they *came back* they had *watered*; but in both they were ready to own it was God that *gave the increase.* Note, It is a great honour to be employed for God, to be workers for him; for those that are so, have him a worker with them; and he must have all the glory.

Sixthly, the opposition they met with from the same party at Jerusalem, *ver. 5.* When Barnabas and Paul gave an account of the multitude of the Gentiles, and of the great harvest of souls gathered in to Christ there, and all about them congratulated them upon it: *there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees*, who received the tidings very coldly, and though *they believed in Christ*, yet were not satisfied in the admission of those converts, but thought it was needful to *circumcise them.* Observe here,

1. That those who have been most prejudiced against the gospel, yet have been captivated by it; so mighty has it been through God to the pulling down of strong-holds. When Christ was here upon earth, few or none of the rulers and of the *Pharisees believed on him*, but now there are those of the *sect of the Pharisees which believed*, and many of them, we hope, in sincerity.

2. That it is very hard for men suddenly to get clear of their prejudices; these that had been Pharisees, even after they became Christians retained some of the old leaven: All did not so, witness Paul, but some did; and had such a jealousy for the ceremonial law, and such a dislike of the Gentiles, that they could not admit the Gentiles into communion with them, unless they would be circumcised, and thereby engage themselves to *keep the law of Moses.* This was in their opinion needful; and for their parts, they would not converse with them unless they submitted to it.

6. ¶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. 7. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8. And God which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us: 9. And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they. 12. ¶ Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. 13. ¶ And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. 14. Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15. And to this agree the words of the prophets: as it is written, 16. After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down: and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17. That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things. 18. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. 19. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20. But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. 21. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.

We have here a council called, not by writ, but by consent, on this occasion, *ver. 6. The apostles and presbyters came together, to consider of this matter.* They did not give their judgment *separately*, but *came together* to do it, that they might hear one another's sense in this matter; for in the multitude of counsellors there is safety and satisfaction. They did not give their judgment rashly, but considered of this matter: Though they were clear concerning it, in their own minds, yet they would take time to consider of it, and to hear what was to be said by the adverse party. Nor did the apostles give their judgment concerning it without the elders, the inferior ministers to whom they thus condescended, and on whom they thus put an honour. Those that are most eminent in gifts and graces, and are in the most exalted stations in the church ought to shew respect to the inferior, and interiors, for though *days should speak*, yet *the night should be silent*. Job xxii. 7, 8. Here is a direction to the pastors and elders, when difficulties arise, to *come together* in solemn meetings, for mutual advice and encouragement, that

that they may know one another's mind, and strengthen one another's hands, and may act in concert.

Now here we have,

First, *Peter's* speech in this synod; he did not in the least pretend to any primacy or headship in this synod, he was not master of this assembly, not so much as chairman, or moderator, *pro hac vice*; for we do not find that either he spoke first to open the synod, *there having been much disputing* before he *rose up*, nor that he spoke last to sum up the cause, and collect the suffrages; but he was a faithful, prudent, zealous member of this assembly, and offered that which was very much to the purpose, and which would come better from him than from another, because he had himself been the first that preached the gospel to the Gentiles: *There had been much disputing, pro and con*, upon this question, and liberty of speech allowed, as ought to be in such cases; those of the *sect of the Pharisees* were some of them present, and allowed to say what they could in defence of those of their opinion at *Antioch*, which, probably, was answered by some of the *elders*; such questions ought to be fairly disputed before they are decided; when both sides had been heard, *Peter rose up*, and addressed himself to the assembly, *Men and brethren*, as did *James* afterwards, *ver. 13*. And here,

1. He puts them in mind of the call and commission he had some time ago to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; he wondered there should be any difficulty made of a matter already settled: *Ye know that, ἀπ' ἀρχαίων ημεῶν*, from the beginning of the days of the gospel, many years ago, God made choice among us, apostles, of one to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and I was the person chosen, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word, and believe, *ver. 7*. You know I was questioned about it, and cleared myself to universal satisfaction, every body rejoiced that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life, and no body said a word of circumcising them, nor was there any thought of such a thing: See *Acts xi. 18*. Why should the Gentiles who hear the word of the gospel by Paul's mouth, be compelled to submit to circumcision, any more than those that heard it by my mouth? Or why should the terms of their admission now be made harder than they were then?

2. He puts them in mind how remarkably God owned him in preaching to the Gentiles, and gave testimony to their sincerity in embracing the Christian faith, *ver. 8*. God who knows the hearts, and therefore is able to judge infallibly of men, he bore them witness, that they were his indeed, by giving them the holy Ghost, not only the graces and comforts, but the extraordinary, miraculous gifts of the holy Ghost, even as he did unto us apostles: See *chap. xi. 13, 16, 17*. Note, 1. The Lord knows them that are his, for he knows mens hearts; and we are as our hearts are. 2. Those to whom God gives the holy Ghost, he thereby bears witness to, that they are his; here we are said to be sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, marked for God.

God had bid the Gentiles welcome to the privilege of communion with him without requiring them to be circumcised, and to keep the law; and therefore shall not we admit them into communion with us but upon those terms? *ver. 9*. God has put no difference between us and them, they, though Gentiles, are as welcome to the grace of Christ, and the throne of grace, as we Jews are, why then should we set them at a distance, as if we were holier than they? *Isa. lxxv. 5*. Note, We ought not to make any other conditions of our brethrens acceptance with us, but such as God has made the conditions of their acceptance with him, *Rom. xiv. 3*. Now the Gentiles were fitted for communion with God, in having their hearts purified by faith, and that faith God's own work in them; and therefore why should we think them unfit for communion with us, unless they will submit to the ceremonial purifying enjoined by the law in us? Note, 1. By faith the heart is purified; we are not only justified, and conscience purified, but the work of sanctification is begun, and carried on. 2. Those that have their hearts purified by faith, therein are made so nearly to resemble one another, that whatever other difference there may be between them, no account is to be made of it; for the faith of all the saints is alike precious, and has like precious effects, *2 Pet. i. 1*. and they that by it are united to Christ, are so to look upon themselves as joined to one another, as that all distinctions, even that between Jew and Gentile, are merged and swallowed up in it.

3. He sharply reproves those teachers (some of whom, it is likely, were present) who went about to bring the Gentiles under the obligation of the law of Moses, *ver. 10*. The thing is so plain, that he cannot forbear speaking of it with some warmth: Now therefore, since God has owned them for his, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, of the believing Gentiles, and their children, for circumcision was a yoke upon their infant seed, who are here reckoned among the disciples, a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Here he shews that in this attempt, 1. They offered a very great affront to God, you tempt him, by calling that in question which he hath already settled and determined by no less an indication than that of the gift of the holy Ghost; you do, in effect, ask, Did he know what he did? Or was he in earnest in it? Or will he abide by his own act? Will you try whether God, who designed the ceremonial law for the people of the Jews only, will now, in its last

ages, bring the Gentiles too under the obligation of it to gratify you? Those tempt God, who prescribe to him, and say people cannot be saved but upon such and such terms, which God never appointed; as if the God of salvation must come into their measures. 2. They offered a very great wrong to the disciples; Christ came to proclaim liberty to the captives, and they go about to enslave those whom he has made free: (See *Neb. v. 8*.) The ceremonial law was a heavy yoke, they and their fathers found it difficult to be borne, so numerous, so various, so pompous were the institutions of it! The distinction of meats was a heavy yoke, not only as it rendered conversation less pleasant, but as it embarrassed conscience with endless scruples. The ado that was made about even the unavoidable touch of a grave, or a dead body, the pollution contracted by it, and the many rules about purifying from that pollution, was a heavy burthen. This yoke Christ came to ease us of, and called those that were weary and heavy laden under it, to come and take his yoke upon them, his easy yoke. Now for these teachers to go about to lay that yoke upon the neck of the Gentiles which he came to free even the Jews from, was the greatest injury imaginable to them.

4. Whereas the Jewish teachers had urged that circumcision was necessary to salvation, Peter shews it was so far from being so, that both Jews and Gentiles were to be saved purely through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and no other way, *ver. 11*. We believe to be saved through that grace only, *πιστεύομεν σωθῆναι*, we hope to be saved; or, we believe unto salvation in the same manner as they, *καθ' ὃν τρόπον κακεῖνοι*: We that are circumcised believe to salvation, and so do they that are uncircumcised; and as our circumcision will be no advantage to us, so their uncircumcision will be no disadvantage to them; for we must depend upon the grace of Christ for salvation, and must apply that grace by faith, as well as they: There is not one way of salvation for the Jews, and another for the Gentiles; neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, that is neither here nor there, but faith which works by love, *Gal. v. 6*. Why should we burthen them with the law of Moses as necessary to their salvation, when it is not that, but the gospel of Christ that is necessary both to our salvation and theirs?

Secondly, An account of what Barnabas and Paul said in this synod, which did not need to be related, for they only gave in a narrative of what was recorded in the foregoing chapters, what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, *ver. 12*. This they had given in to the church at Antioch, *chap. xiv. 27*. to their brethren by the way, *chap. xv. 3*. and now again to the synod; and it was very proper to be given in here; that which was contended for was, that the Gentiles ought to submit to the law of Moses; now, in opposition to this, Paul and Barnabas undertake to shew, by a plain relation of matters of fact, that God owned the preaching of the pure gospel to them without the law, and therefore to press the law upon them now, was to undo what God had done. Observe,

1. What account they gave; they declared, or opened in order, and with all the magnifying and affecting circumstances, what glorious miracles, what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them; what confirmation he had given to their preaching by miracles wrought in the kingdom of nature, and what success he had given to it by miracles wrought in the kingdom of grace: Thus God had honoured these apostles whom the Jewish teachers condemned, and had thus honoured the Gentiles whom they contemned: What needed they any other advocate when God himself pleaded their cause? The conversion of the Gentiles was itself a wonder, all things considered, no less than a miracle: Now if they received the holy Ghost by the hearing of faith, why should they be embarrassed with the works of the law? See *Gal. iii. 2*.

2. What attention was given to them; all the multitude (who, though they had not votes, yet came together to hear what was said) kept silence, and gave audience to Paul and Barnabas; it should seem, they took more notice of their narrative, than they did of all the arguments that were offered. As in natural philosophy and medicine nothing so satisfactory as experiments; and in law nothing so satisfactory as cases adjudged; so in the things of God the best explication of the word of grace is the accounts given of the operations of the Spirit of grace; these the multitude will with silence give audience to: They that fear God, will most readily hear them that can tell them what God has done for their souls, or by their means; *Psaln lxxvi. 16*.

Thirdly, The speech which James made to the synod; he did not interrupt Paul and Barnabas, though, it is likely, he had before heard their narrative, but let them go on with it, for the edification of the company, and that they might have it from the first and best hand; but after they had held their peace, then James stood up: Ye may all prophesy one by one, *1 Cor. xiv. 31*. God is the God of order. He let Paul and Barnabas say what they had to say, and then he made the application of it. The hearing of variety of ministers may be of use when one truth doth not drive out, but clench another.

1. He addresseth himself respectfully to those present: Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Ye are men, and therefore it is to be hoped will hear reason; you are my brethren, and therefore will hear

hear me with candour : We are all *brethren*, and equally concerned in this cause, that nothing be done to the dishonour of Christ, and the uneasiness of Christians.

2. He refers himself to what *Peter* had said concerning the conversion of the *Gentiles*, ver. 14. *Simeon* (i. e. *Simon Peter*) hath declared, and opened the matter to you, how God at the first did visit the *Gentiles*, in *Cornelius* and his friends, who were the first-fruits of the *Gentiles* ; how, when the gospel began first to spread, presently the *Gentiles* were invited to come and take the benefit of it ; and *James* observes here, 1. That the grace of God was the rise of it ; it was God that visited the *Gentiles* ; and it was a kind visit ; had they been left to themselves they would never have visited him, but the acquaintance began on his part ; he not only visited and redeemed his people, but visited and redeemed those that were, *lo ammi*, not a people. 2. That the glory of God was the end of it ; it was to take out of them a people for his name, who should glorify him, and in whom he would be glorified : As of old he took the *Jews*, so now the *Gentiles*, to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, Jer. xiii. 11. Let all the people of God remember, that therefore they are thus dignified in God, that God may be glorified in them.

3. He confirms this with a quotation out of the Old Testament ; he could not prove the calling of the *Gentiles* by a vision as *Peter* could, or by miracles wrought by his hand as *Paul* and *Barnabas* could, but he would prove that it was foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore it must be fulfilled, ver. 15. To this agree the words of the prophets ; most of the Old Testament prophets spoke more or less of the calling in of the *Gentiles*, even *Moses* himself, Rom. x. 19. It was the general expectation of the pious *Jews*, that the *Messiah* should be a light to lighten the *Gentiles*, Luke ii. 32. but *James* waves the more illustrious prophecies of this, and pitches upon one that seemed more obscure ; it is written, Amos ix. 11, 12. where is foretold,

(1.) The setting up of the kingdom of the *Messiah*, ver. 16. I will raise up the tabernacle of *David*, that is fallen. The covenant was made with *David* and his seed, but the house and family of *David* is here called his tabernacle, because *David* in his beginning was a shepherd, and dwelt in tents, and his house, that had been as a stately palace, was become a mean and despicable tabernacle, reduced, in a manner, to its small beginning ; this tabernacle was ruined, and fallen down ; there had not been for many ages a king of the house of *David* ; the sceptre was departed from *Judah*, the royal family was sunk, and buried in obscurity, and, as it should seem, not enquired after ; but God will return, and will build it again, raise it out of its ruins, a phoenix out of its ashes ; and this was now lately fulfilled when our Lord *Jesus* was raised out of that family, had the throne of his father *David* given him, with a promise that he should reign over the house of *Jacob* for ever, Luke i. 32. And when the tabernacle of *David* was thus rebuilt in Christ, all the rest of it was not many years after wholly extirpated and cut off, as was also the nation of the *Jews* itself, and all their genealogies lost. The church of Christ may be called the tabernacle of *David* ; this may sometimes be brought very low, and may seem to be in ruins, but it shall be built again, its withering interests shall revive ; it is cast down, but not destroyed ; even dry bones are made to live.

(2.) The bringing in of the *Gentiles*, as the effect and consequent of this, ver. 17. That the residue of men might seek after the Lord ; not the *Jews* only, who thought they had the monopoly of the tabernacle of *David*, but the residue of men, such as had hitherto been left out of the pale of the visible church ; they must now, upon this re-edifying of the tabernacle of *David*, be brought to seek after the Lord, and to enquire how they may obtain his favour ; when *David's* tabernacle is set up, they shall seek the Lord their God, and *David* their king, Hosea iii. 1. Jer. xxx. 9. Then *Israel* shall seek the remnant of *Edom*, so it is in the Hebrew ; but the *Jews* called all the *Gentiles* *Edomites*, and therefore the Septuagint there leaves out the particular mention of *Edom*, and read it just as it is here, that the residue of men might seek (St. *James* here adds, after the Lord) and all the *Gentiles*, or heathen, upon whom my name is called. The *Jews* were for many ages so peculiarly favoured, that the residue of men seemed neglected ; but now God will have an eye to them, and his name shall be called upon the *Gentiles* ; his name shall be declared and published among them, and they shall be brought forth to know his name, and to call upon it ; they shall call themselves the people of God, and he shall call them so, and thus by consent of both parties, his name is called upon them. This promise we may depend upon the fulfilling of in its season, and now it begins to be fulfilled, for it is added, saith the Lord, who doth this ; who doth all these things ; so the *Seventy* there, and the apostle here ; he saith it, who doth it ; who therefore said it, because he was determined to do it ; and who therefore doth it, because he hath said it ; for though with us saying and doing are two things, they are not so with God. The uniting of *Jews* and *Gentiles* in one body, and all these things that were done in order to it, which was here foretold, were, 1. What God did ; this was the Lord's doing, whatever instruments were employed in it ; and, 2. It was what God delighted in, and was well pleased with, for he is the God of the *Gentiles*, as well as the

Jews, and it is his honour to be rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

4. He resolves it into the purpose and counsel of God, ver. 18. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. He not only foretold the calling of the *Gentiles* many ages ago by the prophets, and therefore it ought not to be a surprize or stumbling-block to us, but he foresaw and foreordained it in his eternal counsels, which are unquestionably wise, and unalterably firm. It is an excellent maxim here laid down concerning all God's works, both of providence and grace, in the natural and spiritual kingdom, that they were all known unto him from the beginning of the world, from the time he first began to work, which supposeth his knowing them, as other scriptures speak, from before the foundation of the world, and therefore from all eternity. Note, Whatever God doth, he did before design and determine to do ; for he works all, not only according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will : He not only doth whatever he determined, Psalm cxxxv. 6. which is more than we can do, our purposes are frequently broken off, and our measures broken, but he determined whatever he doth ; whatever he may say to prove us, he himself knoweth what he will do ; for it is said, Eph. vi. 6. we know not our works beforehand, but must do as occasion shall serve, 1 Sam. x. 7. What we shall do in such or such a case, we cannot tell, till it comes to the setting to ; but known unto God are all his works ; in the volume of his book (called the scriptures of truth, Dan. x. 21.) they are all written in order, without any rasure, or interlining, Psalm xl. 7. and all God's works will, in the day of review, be found to agree exactly with his counsels, without the least error or variation. We are poor short-sighted creatures, the wisest men can see but a little way before them, and not at all with any certainty ; but this is our comfort, that whatever uncertainty we are at, there is an infallible certainty in the divine prescience ; known unto God are all his works.

5. He gives his advice what was to be done in the present case, as the matter now stood with reference to the *Gentiles*, ver. 19. My sentence is, *ἐγὼ κρίνω*, I give it as my opinion, or judgment ; not as having authority over the rest, but as being an adviser with them : Now his advice is,

(1.) That circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, be by no means imposed upon the *Gentile converts* ; no, nor so much as recommended or mentioned to them ; there are many from among the *Gentiles* that are turned to God in Christ, and we hope there will be many more : Now I am clearly for using them with all possible tenderness, and putting no manner of hardship or discouragement upon them, *μὴ παρενοχλεῖν*, not to give them any molestation or disturbance, or suggest any thing to them that may be disquieting, or raise scruples in their minds, or perplex them. Note, Great care must be taken not to discourage or disquiet young converts with matters of doubtful disputation : Let the essentials of religion, which an awakened conscience will readily receive, be first impressed deeply upon them, and those will satisfy them, and make them easy ; and let not things foreign and circumstantial be urged upon them, which will but trouble them : The kingdom of God, which they are to be trained up in, is not meat and drink, either the opposition or the imposition of indifferent things, which will but trouble them, but it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost, which we are sure will trouble no body.

(2.) That yet it would do well that in some things, which gave most offence to the *Jews*, the *Gentiles* should comply with them ; because they must not humour them so far as to be circumcised, and keep the whole law, it doth not therefore follow that they must act in a continual contradiction to them, and study how to provoke them : It will please the *Jews* (and if a little thing will oblige them, better do so than cross them) if the *Gentile converts* abstain,

1. From pollutions of idols, and from fornication, which are two bad things, and always to be abstained from ; but writing to them particularly and expressly to abstain from them (because in these things the *Jews* were jealous of the *Gentile converts*, lest they should transgress) would very much gratify the *Jews* ; not but that the apostles, both in preaching and writing to the *Gentiles* that embraced Christianity, were careful to warn against, 1. Pollutions of idols, that they should have no manner of fellowship with idolaters in their idolatrous worship, and particularly not in the feasts they held upon their sacrifices : See 1 Cor. x. 14, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 14, &c. 2. Fornication, and all manner of uncleanness : How large, how pressing is St. *Paul* in his cautions against this sin ! 1 Cor. vi. 9, 15. Eph. v. 3, &c. But the *Jews*, who were willing to think the worst of those they did not like, suggested that these were things which the *Gentiles*, even after conversion, allowed themselves in, and the apostles of the *Gentiles* connived at it : Now to obviate this suggestion, and to leave no room for this calumny, St. *James* adviseth, that, besides the private admonitions which were given them by their ministers, they should be publicly warned to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication ; that herein they should be very circumspect, and should avoid all appearances of those two evils, which would be in so particular a manner offensive to the *Jews*.

2. *From things strangled, and from blood*; which, though not evil in themselves, as the other two, nor designed to be always abstained from, as those were, yet they had been forbidden by *the precepts of Noah*, Gen. ix. 4. *before the giving of the law of Moses*; and *the Jews* had a great dislike to them, and to all those that took a liberty to use them; and therefore, to avoid giving offence, let *the Gentile converts* abridge themselves of their liberty herein, 1 Cor. viii. 9, 13. Thus we must *become all things to all men*.

6. He gives a reason for his advice, that great respect ought to be shewed *to the Jews*, for they have been so long accustomed to the solemn injunctions of the ceremonial law, that they must be borne with, if they cannot presently come off from them, ver. 21. *For Moses hath of old them that preach him in every city*, his writings (a considerable part of which is the ceremonial law) *being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day*: You cannot blame them, if they have a great veneration for *the law of Moses*; for, besides that they are very sure God spake by Moses, 1. Moses is continually preached *to them*, and they are called upon *to remember the law of Moses*, Mal. iv. 4. Note, Even that word of God which is written to us, should also be preached; those that have the scriptures, yet have need of ministers to help them to understand and apply the scriptures. 2. His writings are *read*, in a solemn, religious manner, *in their synagogues*, and *on the sabbath-day*, in the place, and at the time of their meetings for the worship of God; so that from their childhood they have been trained up in a regard *to the law of Moses*; the observance of it is a part of their religion. 3. This has been done *of old time*; they have received from their fathers an honour for Moses; they have antiquity for it. 4. This has been done *in every city*, wherever there are any Jews, so that none of them can be ignorant what stress that law laid upon these things; and therefore, though the gospel hath set us free from these things, yet they cannot be blamed, if they are loth to part with them, and cannot, of a sudden, be persuaded to look upon those things as needless and indifferent, which they, and their fathers before them, had been so long taught, and taught of God too, to place religion in; and therefore we must give them time, must meet them half-way, they must be borne with a while, and brought on gradually, and we must comply with them as far as we can without betraying our gospel liberty: Thus doth this apostle shew the spirit of a moderator, that is, a spirit of moderation, being careful to give no offence, either to Jew or Gentile, and contriving, as much as may be, to please both sides, and provoke neither. Note, We are not to think it strange if people be wedded to customs which they have had transmitted to them from their fathers, and which they have been educated in an opinion of as sacred; and therefore allowances must be made in such cases, and not rigour used.

22. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23. And wrote letters by them after this manner, The apostles, and elders, and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia. 24. Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law*; to whom we gave no *such* commandment: 25. It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; 26. Men that have hazarded their lives, for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth. 28. For it seemed good to the holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29. That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. 30. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle. 31. *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. 32. And Judas and Silas being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*. 33. And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. 35. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

We have here the result of the consultation that was had at Jerusalem about the imposing of the ceremonial law upon *the Gentiles*. Much more, it is likely, was said about it, than is here recorded; but at length it was brought to a head, and the advice which James gave was universally approved of, and agreed to, *namine contradicente*; and letters were accordingly sent by messengers of their own *to the Gentile converts*, acquainting them with their sentiments in this matter; which would be a great confirmation to them against the false teachers. Now observe here,

First, The choice of the delegates that were to be sent with Paul and Barnabas on this errand; not as if they had any suspicion of the fidelity of these great men, and could not trust them with their letters; or, as if they thought those to whom they sent them, would suspect them to have altered any thing in their letter; no, their *charity thought no such evil* concerning men of such tried integrity; but,

1. They thought fit *to send men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas*, ver. 22. This was agreed to by *the apostles and elders, with the whole church*, who, it is likely, undertook to bear their charges, 1 Cor. ix. 7. They sent these messengers, 1. To shew their respect *to the church at Antioch*, as a sister church, though a younger sister, and that they looked upon it as upon the same level with them; as also that they were desirous further to know their state. 2. To encourage Paul and Barnabas, and to make their journey home the more pleasant (for it is likely they travelled on foot) by sending such excellent men to bear them company; *amicus pro vehiculo*. 3. To put a reputation upon *the letters* they carried, that it might appear a solemn embassy, and so much the more regard might be had to the message, which was likely to meet with opposition from some. 4. To keep up *the communion of saints*, and cultivate an acquaintance between churches and ministers that were at a distance from each other, and to shew, *that though they were many, yet they were one*.

2. Those *they sent* were not inferior persons, who might serve to carry *the letters*, and attest the receipt of them from *the apostles*, but *they were chosen men, and chief men among the brethren*, men of eminent gifts, graces, and usefulness; for these are the things which denominate men *chief among the brethren*, and qualify *them to be the messengers of the churches*: They are here named, Judas, who was called Barsabas, probably, the brother of that Joseph, who was called Barsabas, *that was a candidate for the apostleship*, chap. i. 23. The character which these men had in *the church at Jerusalem*, would have some influence upon *them that came from Judea*, as those false teachers did, and engage them to pay the more deference to the message that was sent by them.

Secondly, The drawing up of *the letters*, circular letters, that were to be *sent to the churches*, to notify the sense of the synod in this matter.

1. Here is a very condescending, obliging preamble to this decree, ver. 23. Here is nothing in it haughty or assuming, but, 1. That which speaks *the humility of the apostles*, that *they join the elders and brethren* in commission with them, the ministers, the ordinary Christians, whom they had advised with in this case, as they used to do in other cases: Though never men were so qualified as they were for a monarchical power and conduct in the church, nor had such a commission as they had, yet their decrees run not, *We, the apostles*, Christ's vicars upon earth, and pastors of all the pastors of the churches (as the pope styles himself) and sole judges in all matters of faith; but, *the apostles, and elders, and brethren*, agree in their orders; herein they remember the instructions their Master gave them, Matt. xxiii. 8. *Be not ye called Rabbi; for all ye are brethren*. 2. That which speaks their respects *to the churches they wrote to*, they *send them greeting*, with them health and happiness, and joy, and call *them brethren of the Gentiles*, thereby owning *their admission into the church*, and giving *them the right hand of fellowship*; you are our *brethren*, though *Gentiles*; for we meet in Christ, *the first-born among many brethren*, in God our common Father: Now *the Gentiles are fellow-heirs*, and of *the same body*, they are to be countenanced, and encouraged, and called *brethren*.

2. Here is a just and severe rebuke to the Judaizing teachers, ver. 24. *We have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words*, and we are very much concerned *to hear it*; now this is to let them know, that those who preached this doctrine were false teachers, both as they produced a false commission, and as they taught a false doctrine.

(1.) They did a great deal of wrong *to the apostles* and ministers at Jerusalem, in pretending that they had instructions from them, to impose *the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles*, when there was no colour for such a pretension: They *went out from us* indeed, they were such as belonged to our church, which, when they had a mind to travel, *we gave them*, perhaps, a testimonial of; but, as for their urging *the law of Moses* upon you, *we gave them no such commandment*, nor had we ever thought of such a thing, nor given them the least occasion to use our names in it. It is no new thing for apostolical authority to be pleaded in defence of those doctrines and practices, which yet *the apostles gave neither command nor encouragement for*.

(2.) They did a great deal of wrong *to the Gentile converts*, in saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and must keep the law*. 1. It per-

Plexed them; *they have troubled you with words*, have occasioned disturbance and disquietment to you; you depended upon those who told you, *If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved*; and now you are startled by those that tell you, *You must keep the law of Moses, or you cannot be saved*; by which you see yourselves drawn into a snare: *They trouble you with words; words and nothing else; very words; sound, but no substance.* How has the church been *troubled with words*, by the pride of men, that loved to hear themselves talk! 2. It endangered them; *they subverted their souls*, put them into disorder, and pulled down that which had been built up: They took them off from pursuing pure Christianity, and minding the business of that, by filling their heads *with the necessity of circumcision, and the law of Moses*, which were nothing to the purpose.

3. Here is an honourable testimony given of the messengers by whom *these letters were sent*.

(1.) Of Paul and Barnabas, whom these Judaizing teachers had opposed and censured as having done their work by the halves, because they had brought *the Gentile converts to Christianity only, and not to Judaism*. Let them say what they will of these men,

1. They are men *that are dear to us, they are our beloved Barnabas and Paul*, men whom we have a value for, a kindness for, a concern for. Sometimes it is good for those that are of eminency to express their esteem, not only for the despised truth of Christ, but for the despised preachers and defenders of that truth, to encourage them, and weaken the hands of their opposers. 2. They are men *that have signalized themselves in the service of Christ*, and therefore have deserved well of all the churches; *they are men that have hazarded their lives, for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 26. and therefore are worthy of double honour, and cannot be suspected of having sought any secular advantage to themselves; for they have ventured their all for Christ, have engaged in the most dangerous services, as good soldiers of Christ, and not only in laborious services: It is not likely that such faithful confessors should be unfaithful preachers; *they that urged circumcision, did it to avoid persecution*, Gal. vi. 12, 13. *they that opposed it*, knew they thereby exposed themselves to persecution; and which of these were most likely to be in the right?

(2.) Of Judas and Silas; *they are chosen men*, ver. 25. and *they are men that have heard our debates, and are perfectly apprized of the matter, and will tell you the same things by mouth*, ver. 27. What is of use to us, it is good to have *both in writing, and by word of mouth*; that we may have the advantage both of reading and of hearing it. The apostles refer themselves to the bearers for a further account of their judgment and their reasons, and the bearers will refer themselves to *their letters* for the certainty of the determination.

4. Here is the direction given what to require from *the Gentile converts*; where observe,

(1.) The matter of the injunction, which is according to the advice given by St. James, *that, to avoid giving offence to the Jews*, 1. They should never *eat any thing that they knew had been offered in sacrifice to an idol*, but look upon it as (though clean in itself, yet) *thereby polluted to them*. This prohibition was afterwards in part taken off, for they were allowed *to eat whatever was sold in the shambles, or set before them at their friend's table, though it had been offered to idols*, except when *there was danger of giving offence by it*, that is, of giving occasion either to a weak Christian to think the worse of our Christianity, or to a wicked heathen to think the better of his idolatry; and in those cases it is good to forbear, 1 Cor. x. 25, &c. This to us is an antiquated case. 2. *That they should not eat blood*, or drink it; but avoid every thing that looked cruel and barbarous; in that ceremony which had been of so long standing. 3. *That they should not eat any thing that was strangled, or died of itself, or had not the blood let out*. 4. *That they should be very strict in censuring those that were guilty of fornication, or marrying within the degrees prohibited by the Levitical law*; which, some think, is principally intended here: See 1 Cor. v. 1. Dr. Hammond states this matter thus: The Judaizing teachers would have *the Gentile converts* to submit to all that those submitted to, whom they called *the proselytes of righteousness, to be circumcised, and keep the whole law*; but the apostles required no more of them than what was required of *the proselytes of the gate*, which was to observe *the seven precepts of the sons of Noah*, which, he thinks, are here referred to: But the only ground of this decree being in compliance to the rigid Jews that had embraced *the Christian faith*, and, except in that one case of scandal, all meats being pronounced free and indifferent to all Christians, as soon as the reason of the decree ceased, which, at furthest, was after the destruction of Jerusalem, the obligation of it ceased likewise. These things were, in a particular manner, offensive to the Jews, and therefore do not disoblige them herein for the present, in a little time *the Jews will incorporate with the Gentiles*, and then the danger is over.

(2.) The manner how it is worded.

1. They express themselves with something of authority, that what they wrote might be received with respect, and deference paid to it: *It seemed good to the holy Ghost, and to us, i. e. to us, under the conduct of the holy Ghost, and by direction from him*. Not only the apostles, but others, were endued with spiritual gifts

extraordinary, and knew more of the mind of God than any, since those gifts ceased, can pretend to; their infallibility gave an uncontested authority to their decrees, and they would not order any thing because *it seemed good to them*, but that they knew *it first seemed good to the holy Ghost*: Or, it refers to what the holy Ghost had determined in this matter formerly: When *the holy Ghost descended upon the apostles*, he endued them with the gift of tongues, in order to their preaching *the gospel to the Gentiles*, which was a plain indication of God's purpose to call them in. When *the holy Ghost descended upon Cornelius and his friends upon Peter's preaching*, it was plain Christ designed the taking down of the Jewish pale, within which they fancied *the Spirit* had been inclosed.

2. They express themselves with abundance of tenderness, and fatherly concern.

(1.) They are afraid of *burthening them*: We will lay upon you no greater burthen: So far were they from delighting to impose upon them, that they dreaded nothing so much as imposing too far upon them, so as to discourage them at their setting out!

(2.) They impose upon them no other but necessary things: The avoiding of *fornication* is necessary to all Christians at all times, the avoiding of *things strangled, and of blood, and of things offered to idols*, is necessary at this time, for the keeping up of a good understanding between you and the Jews, and the preventing of offence; and as long as it continues necessary for that end, and no longer, it is enjoined. Note, Church rulers should impose only necessary things, things that Christ has made duty, and have a real tendency to the edification of the church, and, as these here, to the uniting of good Christians: If they impose things only to shew their own authority, and to try peoples obedience, they forget that they have not authority to make new laws, but only to see that the laws of Christ be duly executed, and to enforce the observation of them.

(3.) They enforce their order with a commendation of those that shall comply with it, rather than with the condemnation of those that shall transgress it; they do not conclude, *from which if you do not keep yourselves, ye shall be an anathema, ye shall be cast out of the church*, and accursed, according to the stile of after councils, and particularly that of Trent; but, *from which if you keep yourselves, as we do not question but ye will, ye shall do well*; it will be for the glory of God, the furtherance of the gospel, the strengthening of the hands of your brethren, and your own credit and comfort: It is all sweetness, and love, and good-humour, such as became the followers of him, who, when he called us to take his yoke upon us, assured us, we should find him meek and lowly in heart. The difference of the stile of the true apostles, from that of the false, is very observable: They that were for imposing the ceremonial law were positive and imperious; *Except ye keep it, ye cannot be saved*, ver. 1. you are excommunicated, *ipso facto*, and delivered to Satan: The apostles of Christ, that only recommend necessary things, are mild and gentle; *From which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well, and as becomes you: Fare ye well*: We are hearty well-wishers to your honour and peace.

Thirdly, The delivering of the letters, and how the messengers disposed of themselves.

1. When they were dismissed, had had their audience of leave of the apostles (it is probable, they were dismissed with prayer, and a solemn blessing in the name of the Lord, and with instructions and encouragements in their work) they then came to Antioch; they stayed no longer at Jerusalem, than till their business was done, and then came back, and, perhaps, were met at their return by them that brought them on their way at their setting out; for those that have taken pains in publick service, ought to be countenanced and encouraged.

2. As soon as they came to Antioch, they gathered the multitude together, delivered the epistle to them, ver. 30, 31. that they might all know what it was that was forbidden them, and might observe these orders, which would be no difficulty for them to do, most of them having been, before their conversion to Christ, *proselytes of the gate*, who had laid themselves under these restrictions already; but this was not all; it was that they might know that no more than this was forbidden them; that it was no longer a sin to eat swines flesh, no longer a pollution to touch a grave, or a dead body.

3. The people were wonderfully pleased with the orders that came from Jerusalem, ver. 31. They rejoiced for the consolation; and a great consolation it was to the multitude, (1.) That they were confirmed in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and were not burthened with that, as those upstart teachers would have had them to be: It was a comfort to them to hear that the carnal ordinances were no longer imposed on them, which perplexed the conscience, but could not purify or pacify it. (2.) That those who troubled their minds with an attempt to force circumcision upon them, were hereby, for the present, silenced, and put to confusion, the fraud of their pretensions to an apostolical warrant being now discovered. (3.) That the Gentiles were hereby encouraged to receive the gospel, and, those that had received it, to adhere to it. (4.) That the peace of the church was hereby restored, and that removed which threatened a division: All this was consolation, which they rejoiced in, and blessed God for.

4. They

4. They got the strange ministers that came from Jerusalem to give them each a sermon, and more, *ver. 32.* Judas and Silas, *being prophets also themselves*, endued with the holy Ghost, and called to the work, and being likewise entrusted by the apostles to deliver some things relating to this matter by word of mouth, they *exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.* Even they that had the constant preaching of Paul and Barnabas, yet were glad of the help of Judas and Silas; the diversity of the gifts of ministers, is of use to the church. Observe, What is the work of ministers with those that are in Christ; 1. To confirm them, by bringing them to see more reason both for their faith in Christ, and their obedience to him; to confirm their choice of Christ, and their resolutions for Christ. 2. To exhort them to perseverance, and to the particular duties required of them; to quicken them to that which is good, and direct them in it. They comforted the brethren; so it may be rendered, and that would contribute to the confirming of them; for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. They exhorted them with many words, they used a very great copiousness and variety of expression; one word would affect one, and another another; and therefore, though what they had to say might have been summed up in a few words, yet it was for the edification of the church, that they used *many words*, *διὰ λόγων πολλῶν*, *with much speech*, much reasoning; *precept must be upon precept.*

5. The dismissal of the *Jerusalem ministers*, *ver. 33.* When they had *spent some time among them*, so it might be read, *ποιήσαντες χρόνον*, having made some stay, and having made it to good purpose, not having trifled away time, but having filled it up, they were *let go in peace* from the brethren at Antioch, to the apostles at Jerusalem, with all possible expressions of kindness and respect; they thanked them for their coming and pains, and the good service they had done, wished them their health, and a good journey home; and committed them to the custody of the *peace of God.*

6. The continuance of Silas, notwithstanding, together with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch. 1. Silas when it came to the setting to, would not go back with Judas to Jerusalem; but let him go home himself, and chose rather to *abide still at Antioch*, *ver. 34.* And we have no reason at all to *blame him for it*, though we know not the reason that *moved him to it.* I am apt to think the congregations at Antioch were both more large, and more lively, than those at Jerusalem, and that tempted him to stay there, and he did well. So did Judas who notwithstanding this, returned to his post of service at Jerusalem. 2. Paul and Barnabas, though their work lay chiefly among the Gentiles, yet continued for some time in Antioch, being pleased with the society of the ministers and people there, which, it should seem by divers passages, was more than ordinarily inviting. They continued there, not to take their pleasure, but *teaching and preaching the word of God.* Antioch being the chief city of Syria, it is likely, there was a great resort of Gentiles thither from all parts, upon one account or other, as there was of Jews to Jerusalem; so that in preaching there, they did in effect preach to *many nations*; for they preached to those who would carry the report of what they preached to *many nations*, and thereby prepare them for the apostles coming *in person* to preach to them: And thus they were not only not idle at Antioch, but were serving their main intention. 3. There were *many others also* there, labouring at the same oar. The multitude of workmen in Christ's vineyard doth not give us a *writ of ease.* Even there where there are many others labouring in the word and doctrine, yet there may be opportunity for us; others zeal and usefulness should excite us, not lay us asleep.

36. ¶ And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren, in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see how they do.* 37. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40. And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

We have seen one *unhappy difference* among the brethren, that was of a publick nature, brought to a good issue; but here we have a *private quarrel* between two ministers, no less men than Paul and Barnabas, not compromised indeed, yet ending well.

First, Here is a good motion Paul made to Barnabas to go and review their work among the Gentiles, and renew it; to take a circuit among the churches they had planted, and see what progress the gospel made among them. Antioch was now a safe and quiet harbour for them, they had there no adversary or evil occurrent; but Paul remembered, they only put in there to refit and refresh themselves, and therefore begins now to think of *putting to sea* again; and having been in winter-quarters long enough, he is for

taking the field again, and making another campaign in a vigorous prosecution of this holy war against Satan's kingdom. Paul remembers that the work appointed him, was *as far off among the Gentiles*, and therefore he is here meditating a second expedition among them to do the same work, though to encounter the same difficulties. And this *some days after*, for his active spirit could not bear to be long out of work; no, nor his bold and daring spirit to be long out of danger. Observe,

1. To whom he makes this motion; to Barnabas, his old friend and fellow-labourer; he invites his company and help in this work. We have need one of another, and may be many ways serviceable one to another; and therefore should be forward both to borrow and lend assistance. Two are better than one. Every soldier has his comrade.

2. For whom the visit is designed; let us not presently begin new work, or break up new ground; but let us take a view of the fields we have sown; *come, and let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish*, Cant. vii. 12. *Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord.* Observe, He calls all the Christians brethren, and not ministers only; for, *Have we not all one Father?* He has a concern for them in *every city*, even there where the brethren were fewest and poorest, and most persecuted and despised; yet let us visit them. Wherever we have *preached the word of the Lord*, let us go and water the seed sown. Note, Those that have preached the gospel, should visit those to whom they have preached it. As we must look after our praying, and hear what answer God gives to that; so we must look after our preaching, and see what success that has. Faithful ministers cannot but have a particular tender concern for those to whom they have preached the gospel; that they may not bestow upon them *labour in vain.* See 1 *Theff.* 5. 6.

3. What was intended in this visit; let us *see how they do*, *πῶς ἔχουσιν*, how it is *with them.* It was not merely a compliment that he designed, nor did he take such a journey with a bare *how d'ye?* No, he would visit them, that he might acquaint himself with their case, and impart unto them such spiritual gifts, as were suited to it; as the physician visits his recovering patient, that he may prescribe what is proper for the perfecting of his cure, and the preventing of a relapse. Let us see how they do, *i. e.* 1. What spirit they are of, how they stand affected, and how they behave themselves; it is probable, they frequently heard from them, but let us go see them; let us go see whether they hold fast what we preached to them; and live up to it, that we may endeavour to reduce them if we find them wavering, to comfort them if we find them steady. 2. What state they are in; whether the churches have rest and liberty; or, whether they are not in trouble or distress, that we may *rejoice with them*, if they rejoice, and caution them against security; and may weep with them, if they weep, and comfort them under the cross, and may know the better how to *pray for them.*

Secondly, The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas about an assistant; it was convenient to have a young man with them that should attend on them, and minister to them, and be a witness of their *doctrine, manner of life, and patience*, and that should be fitted and trained up for further service, by being occasionally employed in the present service. Now,

1. Barnabas would have his nephew John, whose surname was Mark, to go along with them, *ver. 37.* he determined to take him, because he was his relation, and, it is likely, was brought up under him, and he had a kindness for him, and was solicitous for his welfare. We should suspect ourselves of partiality, and guard against it, in preferring our relations.

2. Paul opposed it, *ver. 36.* *He thought not good to take him with them*, *οὐκ ἰσχύει*, he did not think him worthy of the honour, nor fit for the service, who had *departed from them*, clandestinely, as it should seem, without their knowledge, or wilfully without their consent, from Pamphylia, *chap. xiii. 13.* and *went not with them to the work*, either because he was lazy, and would not take the pains that must be taken; or cowardly, and would not run the hazard. He run his colours just as they were going to engage. It is probable he promised very fair now, that he would not do so again: But Paul thought it was not fit he should be thus honoured, who had forfeited his reputation; nor thus employed, who had betrayed his trust; at least, not till he had been longer tried. If a man deceive me once, it is his fault; but if twice, it is my own, for trusting him. Solomon saith, *that confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint*, which will hardly be used again, *Prov. xxv. 19.*

Thirdly, The issue of this disagreement; it came to such a height, that they parted upon it. The contention, the paroxysm, so the word is, the *fit of passion* which this threw them both into, was so sharp, that they *departed asunder one from the other*; Barnabas was peremptory, that he would not go with Paul unless they took John Mark with them; Paul was as peremptory, that he would not go if John did go with them: Neither would yield, and therefore there is no remedy, but they must part. Now here is that which is very humbling, and just matter of lamentation, and yet very instructive. For we see,

1. That the *best of men*, are but *men*, *subject to like passions* as we are; as these two good men had expressly owned concerning themselves,

selves, chap. xiv. 15. and now it appeared too true. I doubt there was (as usually there is in such contentions) a *fault on both sides*; perhaps, Paul was too severe upon the young man, and did not allow his fault the extenuation it was capable of, did not consider what a useful woman his mother was in Jerusalem, chap. xii. 12. nor make the allowances he might have made to Barnabas's natural affection: But it was Barnabas's fault that he took that into consideration in a case wherein the interest of Christ's kingdom was concerned, and indulged it too much. And they were certainly both in fault to be so hot, as to let the contention be so sharp, it is to be feared they gave one another some hard words: As also to be so stiff, as each to stick so resolutely to his opinion, and neither to yield. It was pity they did not refer the matter to a third person; or that some friend did not interpose, to prevent its coming to an open rupture. Is there never a wise man among them to interpose his good offices, and to accommodate the matter, and to put them in mind of the Canaanite and the Perizzite that were *now in the land*; and that not only Jews and heathen, but the false brethren among themselves, would warm their hands at the flames of the contention between Paul and Barnabas? We must own it was their infirmity, and is recorded for our admonition; not, that we must make use of it, to excuse our own intemperate heats, and passions, or to rebate the edge of our sorrow and shame for them; we must not say, What! If I was in a passion; were not Paul and Barnabas so? No; but it must check our censures of others, and moderate them. If good men are soon put into a passion, we must make the best of it; it was the infirmity once of two of the best men that ever the world had! Repentance teaches us to be severe in reflexions upon ourselves; but charity teaches us to be candid in our reflexions upon others. It is only Christ's example, that is a copy without a blot.

2. That we are not to *think it strange*, if there be differences among wise and good men; we are told before that such offences will come, and here is an instance of it. Even they that are united to one and the same Jesus, and sanctified by one and the same Spirit, yet have different apprehensions, different opinions, different views, and different sentiments in point of prudence. It will be so, while we are in this state of darkness and imperfection; we shall never be all of a mind till we come to heaven, where light and love are perfect. That is *charity* which *never fails*,

3. That these differences often prevail so far, as to occasion separations. Paul and Barnabas that were not separated by the persecutions of the unbelieving Jews, nor the impositions of the believing Jews, yet were separated by an unhappy disagreement between themselves. O the mischief that even the poor and weak remainders of pride and passion, that are found even in good men, do in the world, do in the church! no wonder the consequences are so fatal where they reign!

Fourthly, The good that was brought out of this evil. Meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. It was strange that even the sufferings of the apostles (as *Phil. i. 12.*) but much more strange that even the quarrels of the apostles should tend to the furtherance of the gospel of Christ; yet so it proved here. God would not permit such things to be, if he knew not how to make them serve his own purposes.

1. More places are hereby visited; Barnabas went one way, he sailed to Cyprus, *ver. 39.* that famous Island where they began their work, *chap. xiii. 4.* and which was his own country, *chap. iv. 36.* Paul he went another way, into Cilicia, which was his own country, *Acts xx. 39.* Each seem to be influenced by their affection to their native soil, as usual (*nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos ducit*)—and yet God served his own purposes by it, for the diffusing of gospel light.

2. More hands are hereby employed in the ministry of the gospel among the Gentiles; for, 1. John Mark that had been an unfaithful hand, is not rejected, but is again made use of against Paul's mind, and for ought we know proves a very useful and successful hand; though many think it was not the same with that Mark that wrote the gospel, and founded the church at Alexandria, that was he whom Peter calls his son, *1 Pet. v. 13.* 2. Silas that was a new hand, and never yet employed in that work, nor designed to be, but to return to the service of the church at Jerusalem, had not God changed his mind, *ver. 33, 34.* he is brought in, and engaged in that noble work.

We may further observe,

1. That the church at Antioch seemed to countenance Paul in what he did; Barnabas sailed with his nephew to Cyprus, and no notice was taken of him, nor a *bene discessit* given him. Note, Those that in their service of the church are swayed by private affections and regards, forfeit publick honours and respects. But when Paul departed, he was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God. They thought he was in the right in refusing to make use of John Mark, and could not but blame Barnabas for insisting upon it, though he was one who had deserved well of the church, *chap. xi. 22.* before they knew Paul. And therefore they prayed publicly for Paul, and for the success of his ministry, encouraged him to go on in his work, and though they could do nothing themselves to further him, they transferred the matter to the grace of God, leaving it to that grace, both to work upon him, and to work with him. Note, Those are happy at all times, and especially in

times of disagreement and contention, who are enabled so to carry themselves as not to forfeit their interest in the love and prayers of good people.

2. That yet Paul afterwards seemed to have had, though not upon second thoughts, yet upon farther trial, a better opinion of John Mark than now he had; for he writes to Timothy, *2 Tim. iv. 11. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* And writes to the Colossians concerning Marcus sister's son to Barnabas, that if he came to them they should receive him, bid him welcome, and employ him, *Col. iv. 10.* Which teacheth us, 1. That even those whom we justly condemn, yet we should do it moderately, and with a great deal of temper, because we know not but afterwards we may see cause to think better of them, and both to make use of them, and make friendship with them, and we should so regulate our resentments, as that if it should prove so, we may not afterwards be ashamed of them. 2. That even those whom we have justly condemned, if afterwards they prove more faithful, we should cheerfully receive, forgive and forget, and put a confidence in, and as there is occasion, give a good word to.

3. That Paul though he wanted his old friend and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, yet went on cheerfully in his work, *ver. 41. He went through Syria and Cilicia, countries which lay next to Antioch, confirming the churches.* Though we change our colleagues, we do not change our principal president. And observe, ministers are well employed, and ought to think themselves so, and be satisfied when they are made use of in confirming those that believe, as well as in converting those that believe not.

C H A P. XVI.

It is some rebuke to Barnabas that after he left Paul we hear no more of him of what he did or suffered for Christ. But Paul as he was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, so his services for Christ after this are largely recorded, we are to attend him in this chapter from place to place, wherever he came doing good, either watering or planting, beginning new work, or improving what was done. Here is, (1.) The beginning of his acquaintance with Timothy, and taking him to be his assistant, *ver. 1,—3.* (2.) The visit he made to the churches for their establishment, *ver. 4, 5.* (3.) His call to Macedonia, (after a restraint he had been under from going to some other places) and his coming to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, with his entertainment there, *ver. 6,—13.* (4.) The conversion of Lydia there, *ver. 14, 15.* (5.) The casting of an evil spirit out of a damsel, *ver. 16,—18.* (6.) The accusing and abusing of Paul and Silas for it, their imprisonment, and the indignities done them, *ver. 19, 24.* (7.) The miraculous conversion of the jailor to the faith of Christ, *ver. 25,—34.* (8.) The honourable discharge of Paul and Silas by the magistrates, *ver. 35,—40.*

1. **T**hen came he to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: 2. Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were of those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. 4. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Paul was a spiritual father, and as such an one we have him here adopting Timothy, and taking care of the education of many others, who had been begotten to Christ by his ministry: And in all he appears to have been a wise and tender father.

First, Here is his taking of Timothy into his acquaintance, and under his tuition. One thing designed in the book of the Acts is to help us to understand Paul's epistles, two of which are directed to Timothy; it was therefore necessary that in the history of Paul we should have some account concerning him. And we are here accordingly told,

1. That he was a disciple, one that belonged to Christ, and was baptized, probably in his infancy, when his mother became a believer, as Lydia's household was baptized upon her believing, *ver. 15.* He that was a disciple of Christ, Paul took to be his disciple, that he might further train him up in the knowledge and faith of Christ, he took him to be brought up for Christ.

2. That his mother was a Jewess originally, but believed in Christ, her name was Eunice, his grandmother's name was Lois. Paul speaks of them both with great respect, as women of eminent virtue and piety, and commends them especially for their unfeigned faith, *2 Tim. i. 3.* their sincere embracing of, and adhering to the doctrine of Christ.

3. That

3. That his father was a Greek, a Gentile; the marriage of a Jewish woman to a Gentile husband, (though some would make a difference) was prohibited as much as the marriage of a Jewish man to a Gentile wife, *Deut. vii. 3.* Thou shalt no more *give thy daughter to his son, than take his daughter to thy son*; yet that seems to have been limited to the nations that lived among them in Canaan, whom they were most in danger of infection from. Now because his father was a Greek, he was not circumcised; for the entail of the covenant and the seal of it, as of other entails in that nation, went by the father, not by the mother; so that his father being no Jew, he was not obliged to circumcision, nor entitled to it, unless when he grew up he did himself desire it. But observe, though his mother could not prevail to have him circumcised in his infancy, because his father was of another mind and way, yet she educated him in the fear of God; that though he wanted the sign of the covenant, he might not want the thing signified.

4. That he had gained a very good character among the Christians; he was *well reported of by the brethren* that were at Lystra and Iconium; he had not only an unblemished reputation, and was free from scandal, but he had a bright reputation, and great encomiums were given of him, as an extraordinary young man, and one from whom great things were expected. Not only those in the place where he was born, but those in the neighbouring cities, admired him, and spoke honourably of him. He had a name for good things with good people.

5. That Paul would have him to *go forth with him*, to accompany him, to give attendance on him, and receive instruction from him, and to join with him in the work of the gospel; to preach for him when there was occasion, and to be left behind in places where he had planted churches. Paul took a great love to him, not only because he was an ingenious young man, and one of great parts; but because he was a serious young man, and one of devout affections; for Paul was always *mindful of his tears*, 2 Tim. i. 4.

6. That Paul took him and circumcised him, or ordered it to be done; this was strange! Had not Paul opposed those with all his might that were for imposing circumcision upon the Gentile converts? Had he not at this time the decrees of the council at Jerusalem with him, which witnessed against it? He had, and yet circumcised Timothy, not as those teachers designed in imposing circumcision to oblige him to keep the ceremonial law, but only to render his conversation and ministry passable, and, if it might, be acceptable among the Jews that abounded in those quarters. He knew Timothy was a man likely to do a great deal of good with them, being admirably qualified for the ministry, if they were not invincibly prejudiced against him; and therefore that they might not shun him as one unclean, because uncircumcised, he took him and circumcised him. Thus to the Jews, he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, and all things to all men, that he might gain some. He was against those who made circumcision necessary to salvation, but himself used it when it was conducive to edification; nor was he rigid in opposing it as they were in imposing it. Thus though he went not in this instance according to the letter of the decree, he went according to the spirit of it, which was a spirit of tenderness towards the Jews, and willingness to bring them off gradually from their prejudices. Paul made no difficulty of taking him to be his companion, though he was uncircumcised; but the Jews would not hear him if he were, and therefore Paul will humour them herein. It is probable that it was at this time that Paul laid his hands on Timothy, for the conferring of the gift of the holy Ghost upon him, 2 Tim. i. 6.

Secondly, Here is his confirming of the churches which he had planted, *ver. 4, 5.* He went through the cities where he had preached the word of the Lord, as he intended, *chap. xv. 36.* to enquire into their state. And we are told,

1. That they delivered them copies of the decrees of the Jerusalem synod, to be a direction to them in the government of themselves, and that they might have wherewith to answer the Judaizing teachers, and to justify themselves in adhering to the liberty with which Christ had made them free. All the churches were concerned in that decree, and therefore it was requisite they should all have it well attested. Though Paul had for a particular reason circumcised Timothy, yet he would not have that drawn into a precedent; and therefore delivered the decrees to the churches, to be religiously observed; for they must abide by the rule, and not be drawn from it by a particular example.

2. That this was of very good service to them.

1. The churches were hereby established in the faith, *ver. 5.* They were confirmed particularly in their opinion against the imposing of the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles; the great assurance and heat wherewith the Judaizing teachers pressed the necessity of circumcision, and the plausible arguments they produced for it, had shocked them, so that they began to waver concerning it. But when they saw the testimony, not only of the apostles and elders, but of the holy Ghost in them, against it, they were established, and did no longer waver about it. Note, Testimonies to truth, though they may not prevail to convince those that oppose it, yet may be of very good use to establish those that are in doubt concerning it, and to fix them. Nay the design of this decree being to set aside

the ceremonial law, and the carnal ordinances of that, they were by it established in the Christian faith in general, and were the more firmly assured that it was of God, because it set up a spiritual way of serving God, as more suited to the nature both of God and man; and besides, that spirit of tenderness and condescension which appeared in these letters, plainly shewed, that the apostles and elders were herein under the conduct of him who is love itself.

2. They increased in number daily; the imposing of the yoke of the ceremonial law upon their converts, was enough to frighten people from them. If they had been disposed to turn Jews, they could have done that long since, before the apostles came among them; but if they cannot be interested in the Christian privileges, without submitting to the Jews yoke, they will be as they are. But if they find there is no danger of their being enslaved, they are ready to embrace Christianity, and join themselves to the church. And thus the church increased in numbers daily: not a day passed but some or other gave up their names to Christ. And it is a joy to those who heartily wish well to the honour of Christ, and the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, to see such an increase.

6. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8. And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. 9. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering, that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them. 11. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis: 12. And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. 13. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which related thither. 14. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.

In these verses we have,

First, Paul's motions up and down to do good.

1. He and Silas his colleague went throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, where, it should seem, the gospel was already planted, but whether by Paul's hand or no, is not mentioned, it is likely it was, for in his epistles to the Galatians, he speaks of his preaching the gospel to them at the first, and how very acceptable he was among them, *Gal. iv. 13.—15.* And it appears by that epistle, that the Judaizing teachers had then done a great deal of mischief to these churches of Galatia, and had prejudiced them against Paul, and drawn them from the gospel of Christ, for which he there severely reproves them. But, probably, that was a great while after this.

2. They were forbidden at this time to preach the gospel in Asia, that country properly so called, either because it did not need, for other hands were at work there; or because they were not yet prepared to receive it, as they were afterwards, *chap. xix. 10.* when all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord; or, as Dr. Lightfoot suggests, because at this time Christ would employ Paul in a piece of new work, which was to preach the gospel to a Roman colony at Philippi, for hitherto the Gentiles he had preached to were Greeks. The Romans were more particularly hated by the Jews than other Gentiles, their animosity was the abomination of desolation, and therefore there is this among other things extraordinary in his call thither, that he is forbidden to preach the gospel in Asia, and other places, in order to his preaching it there; which is an intimation, that the light of the gospel would in after-times be directed more westward than eastward. It was the holy Ghost that forbade them, either by secret whispers in the minds of both of them, which when they came to compare notes, they found to be the same, and to come from the same Spirit; or, by some prophets who spake to them from the Spirit. The removes of ministers, and the dispensing of the means of grace by them, is in a particular manner under a divine conduct and direction. We find an Old Testament minister forbidden to preach at all, *Ezek. iii. 26.* Thou shalt be dumb. But these New Testament ministers, are only

forbidden to preach in one place, while they are directed to another where there is more need.

3. They would have gone into Bithynia, but were not permitted, *The Spirit suffered them not*, ver. 7. They came to Mysia, and, as it should seem, preached the gospel there; for though it was a very mean contemptible country, even to a proverb, *Myſorum ultimus*, in Cicero, is a most despicable man; yet the apostles disdained not to visit it, owning themselves debtors both to the wife and to the unwife, Rom. i. 14. In Bithynia was the city of Nice, where the first general council was held against the Arians; into these countries Peter sent his epistle, 1 Pet. i. 1. And there were flourishing churches here; for though they had not the gospel sent them now, they had it in their turn, not long after. Observe, though their judgment and inclination was to go into Bithynia, yet they having then extraordinary ways of knowing the mind of God, were overruled by them, contrary to their own mind. We must now follow providence, and submit to the conduct of that pillar of cloud and fire; and what we assay to do, if that *suffer us not*, we ought to acquiesce, and believe it for the best. *The Spirit of Jesus* suffered them not; so many ancient copies read it. *The servants of the Lord Jesus* ought to be always under the check and conduct of the *Spirit of the Lord Jesus*, by whom he governs mens minds.

4. They passed by Mysia, or passed through it, so some; sowing good seed, we may suppose, as they went along; and they came down to Troas; the city of Troy, (so much talked of) or the country thereabout that took its denomination from it. Here a church was planted; for here we find one in being, *Acts* xx. 6, 7. and probably planted at this time, and in a little time. It should seem, that at Troas, Luke fell in with Paul, and joined himself to his company, for from henceforward, for the most part, when he speaks of Paul's journies, he puts himself into the number of his retinue, *we went*, ver. 10.

Secondly, Paul's particular call to Macedonia, that is to Philippi, the chief city, inhabited mostly by Romans, as appears, ver. 21. Here we have,

1. The vision Paul had, ver. 9. Paul had many visions, sometimes to encourage, sometimes, as here, to direct him in his work. An angel appeared to him to intimate to him, that it was the will of Christ he should go to Macedonia. Let him not be discouraged by the embargo laid upon him once and again, by which his designs were crossed; for though he shall not go where he has a mind to go, he shall go where God has work for him to do. Now observe,

1. The person Paul saw; there stood by him a man of Macedonia, that by his habit or dialect seemed so to Paul, who knew it to be a man of that country; or told him he was so. The angel, some think, assumed the shape of such a man; or, as others think, impressed upon Paul's fancy, between sleep and wake, the image of such a man: he dreamed he saw such an one. Christ would have Paul directed to Macedonia, not as the apostles were at other times, by a messenger from heaven, to send him thither, but by a messenger from thence to call him thither, because in that way he would afterwards ordinarily direct the motions of his ministers, by inclining the hearts of those who need them, to invite them. Paul shall be called to Macedonia by a man of Macedonia, and by him speaking in the name of the rest. Some make this man to be the tutelar angel of Macedonia; supposing angels to have charge of particular places, as well as persons, and that so much is intimated, *Dan.* x. 20. where we read of the *princes of Persia and Grecia*, that seem to have been angels. But there is no certainty of that. There was presented either to Paul's eyes, or to his mind, a man of Macedonia. The angel must not preach the gospel himself to the Macedonians, but must bring Paul to them. Nor must he by the authority of an angel order him to go, but, in the person of a *Macedonian*, court him to come. A man of Macedonia, not a magistrate of the country, much less a priest, Paul did not use to receive invitations from such; but an ordinary inhabitant of that country, a plain man, that carried in his countenance marks of probity and seriousness, that did not come to banter Paul, or trifle with him, but in good earnest, and with all earnestness, to importune his assistance.

2. The invitation given him; this honest Macedonian prayed him, saying, *come over into Macedonia and help us*; i. e. Come and preach the gospel to us, let us have the benefit of thy labours. 1. *Thou hast helped many*, we have heard of those in this and the other country that thou hast been very useful to; and, why may not we put in for a share? O come and help us. The benefits others have received from the gospel, should quicken our enquiries, our further enquiries after it. 2. It is thy business, and it is thy delight to help poor souls; thou art a physician for the sick, that art to be ready at the call of every patient; O come and help us. 3. We have need of thy help, as much as any people, we in Macedonia are as ignorant and as careless in religion, as any people in the world are; are as idolatrous and as vicious as any, and as ingenious and industrious to ruin ourselves as any; and therefore, O come, come with all speed among us; *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us*. 4. Those few among us that have any sense of things, and any concern for their own souls, and the souls of others, have done what can be done by the help of natural light; I have done my part for one, we have carried the matter as far as it will go, to persuade our neighbours to fear and worship God, but we can do

little good among them: O come, come thou over, and help us. The gospel thou preacheſt, hath arguments and powers beyond those we have been yet furnished with. 5. Do not only help us with thy prayers here, that will not do; thou must come over and help us. Note, People have great need of help for their souls, and it is their duty to look out for it, and invite those among them that can help them.

2. The interpretation made of the vision, ver. 10. They gathered assuredly from thence, that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel there, and they were ready to go wherever God directed. Note, We may sometimes infer a call of God from a call of man. If a man of Macedonia say, *come and help us*; from thence Paul gathers assuredly, that God saith, *Go and help them*. Ministers may go on with a great of cheerfulness and courage in their work, when they perceive Christ calling them not only to preach the gospel, but to preach it at this time, in this place, to this people.

Thirdly, Paul's voyage to Macedonia, hereupon; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but followed this divine conduct much more cheerfully, and with more satisfaction than he would have followed any contrivance or inclination of his own.

1. Thitherward he turned his thoughts; now he knows the mind of God in the matter, he is determined, for this was all he wanted; now he thinks no more of Asia, or Bithynia, but immediately, *we endeavoured to go into Macedonia*. Paul only had the vision, but he communicated it to his companions, and they all upon the credit of that resolved for Macedonia. As Paul will follow Christ, so all his will follow him, or rather follow Christ with him. They are getting things in readiness for this expedition immediately, without delay. Note, God's calls must be complied with presently; as our obedience must not be disputed so it must not be deferred; do it to day, lest thy heart be hardened. Observe, They could not immediately go into Macedonia; but they immediately endeavoured to go. If we cannot be so quick as we should be in our performances, yet we may be in our endeavours, and that shall be accepted.

2. Thitherward he steered his course; they set sail by the first shipping, and with the first fair wind from Troas; for they may be sure they have done what they have to do there, when God calls them to another place. They came with a straight course, i. e. a prosperous voyage to Samothracia, the next day they came to Neapolis, a city in the confines of Thrace and Macedonia; and at last they landed at Philippi, a city so called from Philip king of Macedon, the father of Alexander the great; it is said, ver. 17. to be 1. The chief city of that part of Macedonia; or, as some read it, the first city, the first they came to when they came from Troas; so that like an army that lands in a country, which they design to make themselves masters of, they begin with the reduction of the first place they come to; so did Paul and his assistants, they begun with the chief city, because if the gospel were received there, it would the easier spread from thence all the country over. 2. It was a colony; The Romans not only had a garrison, but the inhabitants of the city were Romans, the magistrates, and the governing part. There were the greatest numbers and variety of people, and therefore the most likelihood of doing good.

Fourthly, The cold entertainment which Paul and his companions met with at Philippi. One would have expected that having such a particular call from God thither, they should have had a joyful welcome there, as Peter had with Cornelius when the angel sent him thither; whereas the man of Macedonia that begged Paul to come thither with all speed, why did not he stir up his countrymen, some of them at least to go meet him, why was he not introduced with solemnity, and the keys of the city put into his hand? Here is nothing like that, for,

1. It is a good while before any notice at all is taken of him, *we were in that city abiding certain days*, probably, at a publick house, and at their own charge, for they had no friend to invite them so much as to a meal's meat, till Lydia welcomed them. They had made all the haste they could thither, but now they are there, are almost tempted to think they might as good have stayed where they were. But so it was ordered for their trial, whether they could bear the pain of silence and lying by, when that was their lot; those eminent useful men are not fit to live in this world that know not how to be slighted and overlooked. Let not ministers think it strange if they be first strongly invited to a place, and yet looked shily upon when they come.

2. When they have an opportunity of preaching it is in an obscure place, and to a mean and small auditory, ver. 13. There was no synagogue of the Jews there, for ought appears, to be a door of entrance to them, and they never went to the idol temples of the Gentiles, to preach to the auditories there; but here, upon enquiry, they found out a little meeting of good women, *that were proselytes of the gate*, and they will be thankful to them if they will give them a sermon: The place of this meeting is out of the city, there it was connived at, but would not be suffered any where within the walls: It was a place where prayer was wont to be made, *προσευχή*, where an oratory, or house of prayer was, so some; a chapel, or lesser synagogue: But I rather take it, as we read it, *where prayer was appointed*, or accustomed to be: They that worshipped the true God, and would not worship idols, met there to pray together, and, according to the description of the most ancient and universal devotion, to call upon the name of the Lord: They each

each of them prayed apart every day, that was always the practice of them that worshipped God; but, besides that, *they came together on the sabbath-day*; though they were but a few, discountenanced by the town, though their meeting at some distance, though, for ought appears, none but women, yet a solemn assembly the worshippers of God must have, if by any means it be possible, *on the sabbath-day*; and when we cannot do as we would, we must do as we can; if we have not synagogues, we must be thankful for more private places, and resort to them; *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, according as our opportunities are. This place is said to be *by a river-side*, which, perhaps, was chosen, as befriending contemplation: Idolaters are said to take their lot among the smooth stones of the stream, Isa. lvii. 6. But these profelytes had in their eye, perhaps, the example of those prophets who had their visions, one by the river of Chebar, Ezek. i. 1. another by the great river Hiddekel, Dan. x. 4. Thither Paul, and Silas, and Luke went, and sat down, to instruct the congregation, that they might the better pray with them; they spake unto the women which resorted thither, encouraged them in practising according to the light they had, and led them on further to the knowledge of Christ.

Fifthly, The conversion of *Lydia*, who, probably, was the first that was wrought upon there to believe in Christ, though not the last: In this story of the *Acts*, we have not only the conversion of places recorded, but of many particular persons; for such is the worth of souls, that the reducing of one to God is a great matter! Nor have we only the conversions that were done by miracle, as Paul's, but some that were done by the ordinary methods of grace, as Lydia's here. Observe,

(1.) Who this convert was, that there is such particular notice taken of; four things are recorded of her:

1. Her name, *Lydia*; it is an honour to her to have her name recorded here in the book of God, so that *wherever the scriptures are read, there shall this be told concerning her*. Note, The names of the saints are precious with God, and should be so with us; we cannot have our names recorded in the Bible, but, if God open our hearts, we shall find them written in the book of life, and that is better, Phil. iv. 3. and more to be rejoiced in, Luke x. 20.

2. Her calling, she was a *seller of purple*; either of purple dye, or of purple cloth or silk. Observe, 1. She had a calling, an honest calling, which the historian takes notice of to her praise; she was none of those women that the apostle speaks of, 1 Tim. v. 13. *who learn to be idle, and not only idle, &c.* 2. It was a mean calling, she was a *seller of purple*, not a wearer of purple, few such are called; the notice taken of this here is an intimation to those who are employed in honest callings, if they be honest in the management of them, not to be ashamed of them. 3. Though she had a calling to mind, yet she was a *worshipper of God*, and found time to improve advantages for her soul: The business of our particular callings may be made to consist very well with the business of religion, and therefore it will not excuse us from religious exercises alone, and in our families, or in solemn assemblies, to say, we have shops to look after, and a trade to mind; for have we not also a God to serve, and a soul to look after? Religion doth not call us from our business in the world, but directs us in it: Every thing in its time and place.

3. The place she was of, *of the city of Thyatira*; which was a great way from Philippi; there she was born and bred, but either married to Philippi, or brought by her trade to settle there. The providence of God, as it always appoints, so it often removes the bounds of our habitation, and sometimes makes the change of our outward condition, or place of our abode, wonderfully subservient to the designs of his grace concerning our salvation; providence brings Lydia to Philippi, to be under Paul's ministry, and there, where she met with it, she made a good use of it; so should we improve opportunities.

4. Her religion, before the Lord opened her heart.

(1.) She worshipped God, according to the knowledge she had; she was one of the *devout women*: Sometimes the grace of God wrought upon those, who, before their conversion, were very wicked and vile, *publicans and harlots*; such were some of you, 1 Cor. vi. 11. But sometimes it fastened upon those that were of a good character, that had some good in them, as the eunuch, Cornelius, and Lydia here. Note, It is not enough to be worshippers of God, but we must be believers in Jesus Christ, for there is no coming to God as a father, but by him as mediator. But those who worshipped God according to the light they had, stood fair for the discoveries of Christ and his grace to them; for to him that has, shall be given: And to them Christ would be welcome; for they that know what it is to worship God, see their need of Christ, and know what use to make of his mediation.

(2.) She heard us: Here, *where prayer was made*, when there was an opportunity, *the word was preached*; for hearing the word of God is a part of religious worship; and how can we expect God should hear our prayers, if we will not hearken to his word? They that worshipped God according to the light they had, looked out for further light; we must improve *the day of small things*, but must not rest in it.

(2.) What the work was that was wrought upon her *whose heart the Lord opened*. Observe here,

1. The author of this work, it was the Lord, the Lord Christ, to whom this judgment is committed; *the Spirit of the Lord*, who is the sanctifier. Note, Conversion work is God's work; it is he that works in us both to will and to do; not as if we had nothing to do, but of ourselves, without God's grace, we can do nothing; not as if God were in the least chargeable with the ruin of them that perish, but the salvation of them that are saved must be wholly ascribed to him.

2. The seat of this work, it is in the heart that the change is made, it is to the heart that this blessed turn is given; it was the heart of Lydia that was wrought upon; conversion work is heart work; it is a *renewing of the heart, the inward man, the spirit of the mind*.

3. The nature of the work, she had not only her heart touched, but her heart opened: An unconverted soul is shut up, and fortified against Christ, *straitly shut up*, as Jericho against Joshua, Joshua vi. 1. Christ, in dealing with the soul, *knocks at the door that is shut against him*, Rev. iii. 20. and when a sinner is effectually perswaded to embrace Christ, *then the heart is opened for the King of glory to come in*; the understanding is opened to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love: And when the heart is thus opened to Christ, the ear is opened to his word, the lips opened in prayer, the hand opened in charity, and the steps enlarged in all manner of gospel obedience.

(3.) What were the effects of this work on the heart:

1. She took great notice of the word of God; her heart was so opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul; she not only gave attendance on Paul's preaching, but gave attention to it; she applied to herself (so some read it) *the things that were spoken of Paul*; and then only the word doth us good, and makes an abiding impression upon us, when we apply it to ourselves. Now this was an evidence of the opening of her heart, and was the fruit of it; wherever the heart is opened by the grace of God, it will appear by a diligent attendance on, and attention to the word of God, both for Christ's sake, whose word it is, and for our own sakes, who are so nearly interested in it.

2. She gave up her name to Jesus Christ, and took upon her the profession of his holy religion; she was baptized, and, by that solemn rite, was admitted a member of the church of Christ; and with her her household also was baptized, those of them that were infants, in her right, for if the root be holy, so are the branches, and those that were grown up, by her influence and authority: She and her household were baptized, by the same rule that Abraham and his household were circumcised, because the seal of the covenant belongs to the covenanters and their seed.

3. She was very kind to the ministers, and very desirous to be further instructed by them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; she besought us, saying, *If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, if you take me to be a sincere Christian, manifest your confidence in me by this, come into my house, and abide there*. Thus she desired an opportunity, 1. To testify her gratitude to them, who had been the instruments of divine grace in this blessed change that was wrought upon her. When her heart was open to Christ, her house was open to his ministers for his sake, and they were welcome to the best entertainment she had, which she did not think too good for those of whose spiritual things she had reaped so plentifully: Nay, they are not only welcome to her, but she is extremely pressing and importunate with them; she constrained us; which intimates, that Paul was very backward and unwilling to go, because he was afraid of being burthensome to the families of the young converts, and would study to make the gospel of Christ without charge, 1 Cor. ix. 18. Acts xx. 34. that those that were without might have no occasion given them to reproach the preachers of the gospel as designing, self-seeking men, and that those that were within might have no occasion to complain of the expences of their religion; but Lydia would have no nay, she will not believe that they take her to be a sincere Christian, unless they will oblige her herein; like Abraham inviting the angels, Gen. xviii. 3. *If now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant*. 2. She desired an opportunity of receiving further instruction: If she might but have them for a while in her family, she might hear them daily, Prov. viii. 34. and not only on sabbath-days at the meeting; in her own house she might not only hear them, but ask them questions; and she might have them to pray with her daily, and to bless her household. Those that know something of Christ, cannot but desire to know more, and seek opportunities of increasing their acquaintance with his gospel.

16. ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17. The same followed Paul, and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. 18. And this she did many days. But Paul being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And

And he came out the same hour. 19. ¶ And when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place, unto the rulers; 20. And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21. And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. 23. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely. 24. Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Paul and his companions, though they were for some time buried in obscurity at Philippi, yet now begin to be taken notice of.

First, *A damsel*, that had a *spirit of divination*, made them to be taken notice of, by proclaiming them to be *the servants of God*. Observe,

1. The account that is given of this damsel; she was *pythoniſſa*, possessed with such a *spirit of divination*, as that damsel was, by whom the oracles of Apollo at Delphos were delivered; she was acted by an evil spirit, that dictated ambiguous answers to those who consulted her, which served to gratify their vain desire of knowing things to come, but oft deceived them: In those times of ignorance, infidelity, and idolatry, the devil, by the divine permission, thus led men captive at his will; and he could not have gained such adoration from them as he had, if he had not pretended to give oracles to them; for by both his usurpation is maintained as *the god of this world*. This damsel brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; many came to consult this witch for the discovery of robberies, the finding of things lost, and, especially, to be told their fortune; and none came but with the rewards of divination in their hands, according to the quality of the person, and the importance of the case: Probably, there were many that were thus kept for fortune-tellers, but, it should seem, this was more in repute than any of them; for while others brought some gain, this brought much gain to her masters, being consulted more than any other.

2. The testimony which this damsel gave to Paul and his companions; she met them in the street, as they were going to prayer, to the house of prayer, or rather, to the work of prayer there, ver. 16. They went thither publickly, every body knew whither they were going, and what they were going to do. If what she did was likely to be any distraction to them, or a hindrance in their work, it is observable how subtil Satan is, that great tempter, to give us diversion then, when we are going about any religious exercises, to ruffle us, and to put us out of temper then, when we need to be most composed. When she met with them, she followed them, crying, *These men*, how contemptible soever they look, and are looked upon, are great men, for they are the servants of the most high God, and men that should be very welcome to us, for they shew unto us the way of salvation, both the salvation, that will be our happiness, and the way to it, that will be our holiness.

Now, (1.) This witness is true; it is a comprehensive encomium of the faithful preachers of the gospel, and makes their feet beautiful, Rom. x. 15. Though they are men subject to like passions as we are, and earthen vessels, yet, 1. They are the servants of the most high God, they attend on him, are employed by him, and are devoted to his honour as servants; they come to us on his errands, the message they bring is from him, and they serve the purposes and interests of his kingdom: The gods we Gentiles worship are inferior beings, therefore not gods, but they belong to the supreme numen, to the most high God, who is over all men, over all gods, who made us all, and to whom we are all accountable: They are his servants, and therefore it is our duty to respect them, and hearken to them, for their Master's sake, and it is at our peril if we affront them. 2. They shew unto us the way of salvation: Even the heathen had some notion of the miserable, deplorable state of mankind, and their need of salvation, and it was what they made some enquiries after: Now, saith she, these are the men that shew us what we have in vain sought for in our superstitious, profitless application to our priests and oracles. Note, God has, in the gospel of his Son, plainly shewed us the way of salvation; has told us what we must do that we may be delivered from the misery, to which by sin we have exposed ourselves.

But, (2.) How came this testimony from the mouth of one that had a spirit of divination? Is Satan divided against himself? Will he cry up those, whose business it is to pull him down? We may take it either,

1. As extorted from this spirit of divination for the honour of the gospel by the power of God; as the devil was forced to say of Christ, Mark i. 24. I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God. The truth is sometimes magnified by the confession of its

adversaries, in which they are witnesses against themselves. Christ would have this testimony of the damsel to rise up in judgment against those at Philippi, who slighted and persecuted the apostles; though the gospel needed no such testimony, yet it shall serve to add to their condemnation, that the damsel whom they looked upon as an oracle in other things, proclaimed the apostles God's servants. Or,

2. As designed by the evil spirit, that subtil serpent, to the dishonour of the gospel, some think she designed hereby to gain credit to herself and her prophecies, and so to increase her masters profit, by pretending to be in the interest of the apostles, who she thought had a growing reputation, or to speak Paul fair not to part between her and her familiar. Others think, Satan who can transform himself into an angel of light, and can say any thing to serve a turn, designed hereby to disgrace the apostles, as if these divines were of the same fraternity with their diviners, because they were witnessed to by them; and then the people had as good stick to those they had been used to: Those that were most likely to receive the apostles doctrine, were such as were prejudiced against these spirits of divination, and therefore would, by this testimony, be prejudiced against the gospel; and as for these who regarded these diviners, the devil thought himself sure of them.

Secondly, Christ made them to be taken notice of, by giving them power to cast the devil out of this damsel. She continued many days clamouring thus, ver. 18. and, it should seem, Paul took no notice of her, not knowing but it might be ordered of God for the service of his cause, that she should thus witness concerning his ministers; but finding, perhaps, that it did them a prejudice, rather than any service, he soon silenced her, by casting the devil out of her.

1. He was grieved; it troubled him to see the damsel made an instrument of Satan to deceive people, and to see the people imposed upon by her divinations: It was a disturbance to him to hear a sacred truth so profaned, and good words come out of such an ill mouth with such an ill design: Perhaps, they were spoken in an ironical, bantering way, as ridiculing the apostles pretensions, and mocking them; as when Christ's persecutors complimented him with, *Hail, King of the Jews*; and then justly might Paul be grieved, as any good man's heart would be, to hear any good truth of God bawled out in the streets in a canting, jeering way.

2. He commanded the evil spirit to come out of her; he turned with a holy indignation, angry both at the flatteries, and at the reproaches of the unclean spirit, and said, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her; and by this he will shew that those men are the servants of the living God, and are able to prove themselves so, without her testimony; her silence shall demonstrate it more than her speaking could do: Thus Paul shews the way of salvation indeed, that it is by breaking the power of Satan, and chaining him up, that he may not deceive the world, Rev. xx. 3. and that this salvation is to be obtained in the name of Jesus Christ only, as in his name the devil was now cast out, and by no other. It was a great blessing to the country when Christ by a word cast the devil out of those, in whom he frightened people, and molested them, so that no man might pass by that way, Matt. viii. 28. but it was a much greater kindness to the country when Paul now, in Christ's name, cast the devil out of one who deceived people, and imposed upon their credulity: Power went along with the word of Christ, which Satan could not stand before, but was forced to quit his hold, and, in this case, it was a stronghold, he came out the same hour.

Thirdly, The masters of the damsel that was dispossessed made them to be taken notice of, by bringing them before the magistrates for doing it, and laying it to their charge as their crime: And the preachers of the gospel would never have had an opportunity of speaking to the magistrates, if they had not been brought before them as evil-doers. Observe here,

1. That which provoked them was, that, now the damsel was restored to herself, her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, ver. 19. See here what evil the love of money is the root of! If the preaching of the gospel ruin the craft of the silver-smiths, Acts xix. 24. much more the craft of the soothsayers; and therefore here is a mighty outcry raised, when Satan's power to deceive is broken; and therefore the priests hated the gospel, because it turned men from the blind service of dumb idols, and so the hope of their gains was gone. The power of Christ which appeared in dispossessing the woman, and the great kindness done to her in delivering her out of Satan's hand, made no impression upon them, when they apprehended that they should lose money by it.

2. The course they took with them, was to incense the higher powers against them, as men fit to be punished: They caught them as they went along, and, with the utmost fury and violence, dragged them into the market-place, where publick justice was administered: 1. They brought them to the rulers, their justices of peace, to do by them as men taken into the hands of the law, the duumviri. 2. From them they hurried them to the magistrates, the prætors, or governors of the city, τοῖς στρατηγοῖς, the officers of the army, so the word signifies; but it is taken in general for the judges, or chief rulers; to them they brought their complaint.

3. The charge they exhibit against them is, *that they were the troublers of the land*, ver. 24. They take it for granted *that they were Jews*, a nation, at this time, as much an *abomination to the Romans*, as they had long ago been to the Egyptians: Piteous was the case of the apostles, when it was turned to their reproach *that they were Jews*, and yet the Jews were their most violent persecutors! 1. The general charge against them is, *that they troubled the city*, sowed discord, and disturbed the publick peace, and occasioned riots and tumults, than which nothing could be more false and unjust, as was Ahab's character of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 17. *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* If they troubled the city, it was but, like the angel's troubling the water of Bethesda's pool, in order to healing; shaking, in order to a happy settlement. Thus they that rouse the sluggards, are exclaimed against for troubling them. 2. Their proof of their charge is, *their teaching customs not proper to be admitted by a Roman colony*, ver. 21. The Romans were always very jealous of innovations in religion, right or wrong, they would stick to that, how vain soever, which they had received by tradition from their fathers; no foreign or upstart deity must be allowed of, without the approbation of the senate; the gods of their country must be their gods, true or false. It was one of the laws of the twelve tables, *Hath a nation changed their gods?* This incensed them against the apostles, *that they taught a religion destructive of polytheism and idolatry, and preached to them to turn from those vanities*: This the Romans could not bear; if this grow upon us, in a little while we shall lose our religion.

Fourthly, *The magistrates*, by their proceedings against them, made them to be taken notice of:

1. By countenancing the persecution, they raised the mob upon them, ver. 22. *The multitude rose up together against them*, and were ready to pull them to pieces. It has been the artifice of Satan, to make God's ministers and people odious to the commonalty, by representing them as dangerous men, and aiming at the destruction of the constitution, and the changing of the customs, when really there has been no ground for such an imputation.

2. By going on to an execution they further represented them as the vilest of malefactors: *They rent off their clothes*, with rage and fury, not having patience till they were taken off, in order to their being scourged. This the apostle refers to, when he speaks of *their being shamefully entreated at Philippi*, 1 Thess. ii. 2. They commanded that they should be whipped as vagabonds, by the lictors or beadles, who attended the prætors, and carried rods with them for that purpose; this was one of those *three times that Paul was beaten with rods*, according to the Roman usage, which was not under the compassionate limitation of the number of stripes not to exceed forty, which was provided by the Jewish law: It is here said, *that they laid many stripes upon them*, ver. 23. without counting how many, because they seemed vile unto them, Deut. xxv. 3.

Now, one would think, this might have satiated their cruelty, if they must be whipped, sure they must be discharged; no, they are imprisoned, and, it is probable, their present purpose was to try them for their lives, and put them to death, else why should there be such care taken to prevent their escape.

(1.) The judges made their commitment very strict, they charged the jailor to keep them safely, and have a very watchful eye upon them, as if they were dangerous men, that either would venture to break prison themselves, or were in confederacy with those that would attempt to rescue them: Thus they endeavoured to render them odious, that they might justify themselves in the base usage they had given them.

(2.) The jailor made their confinement very severe, ver. 24. *Having received such a charge*, though he might have kept them safely enough in the outer prison, yet he thrust them into the inner prison: He was sensible that the magistrates had a great indignation against these men, and were inclined to be severe with them, and therefore he thought to ingratiate himself with them, by exerting his power likewise against them to the uttermost. When magistrates are cruel, it is no wonder that the officers under them are so too. He put them into the inner prison, the dungeon, into which none was usually put but condemned malefactors, dark at noon-day, damp and cold, dirty, it is likely, and stinking, like that into which Jeremiah was let down, Jer. xxxviii. 6. and, as if that were not enough, he made their feet fast in the stocks. Perhaps, having heard a report of the escape of the preachers of the gospel out of prison, when the doors were fast barred, Acts v. 1. xii. 9. he thought he would be wiser than other jailors had been, and therefore would effectually secure them by fastening them in the stocks; and they were not the first of God's messengers that had their feet in the stocks, Jeremiah was so treated, and publicly too, in the high-gate of Benjamin, Jer. xx. 2. Joseph had his feet hurt with fetters, Psalm cv. 18. O what hard usage have God's servants met with! as in the former days, so in the latter times! witness the book of martyrs, martyrs in queen Mary's time.

25. ¶ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thy self no harm; for we are all here. 29. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas: 30. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

We have here the designs of the persecutors of Paul and Silas baffled and broken.

First, The persecutors designed to dishearten and discourage the preaching of the gospel, and to make them sick of the cause, and weary of their work; but here we find them both hearty and heartened.

1. They were themselves hearty, wonderful hearty; never were poor prisoners so truly cheerful, nor so far from laying their hard usage to heart. Let us consider what their case was; the prætors among the Romans had rods carried before them, and axes bound upon them; the *fascies* and *secures*: Now they had felt the smart of the rods, *the plowers had plowed upon their backs, and made long their furrows*; the many stripes they had laid on them, were very sore, and one might have expected to hear them complaining of them, of the rawness and soreness of their backs and shoulders; yet this was not all, they had reason to fear the axes next; their Master was first scourged, and then crucified; and they might expect the same: In the mean time they were in the inner prison, their feet in the stocks, which (some think) not only held them, but hurt them; and yet, at midnight, when they should have been trying, if possible, to get a little rest, they prayed, and sang praises to God. 1. They prayed together; prayed to God to support them, and comfort them in their afflictions; to visit them, as he did Joseph in the prison, and to be with them; prayed that their consolations in Christ might abound, as their afflictions for him did; prayed that even their bonds and stripes might turn to the furtherance of the gospel; prayed for their persecutors, that God would forgive them, and turn their hearts: This was not an hour of prayer, but at midnight; it was not a house of prayer, but in a dungeon; yet it was seasonable to pray, and the prayer was acceptable: As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God: No place, no time amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God: They that are companions in suffering, should join in prayer; *Is any afflicted? let him pray*: No trouble, how grievous soever, should indispose us for prayer. 2. They sang praises to God; they praised God; for we must in every thing give thanks: We never want matter for praise, if we do not want a heart: And what should put the heart of a child of God out of tune for that duty, if a dungeon and a pair of stocks will not do it? They praised God that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and that they were so wonderfully supported and borne up under their sufferings, and felt divine consolations so sweet, so strong in their souls: Nay, they not only praised God, but they sang praises to him, in some psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, either one of David's, or some modern composition, or one of their own, as the Spirit gave them utterance. As our rule is, *that the afflicted should pray*, and therefore, being in affliction, they prayed; so our rule is, *that the merry should sing psalms* (Jam. v. 13.) and therefore, being merry in their affliction, merry after a godly sort, they sung psalms. This proves that singing of psalms is a gospel ordinance, and ought to be used by all good Christians, and that it is instituted not only for the expressing of their joys in a day of triumph, but for the balancing and relieving of their sorrows in a day of trouble. It was at midnight that they sang psalms, according to the example of the sweet psalmist of Israel, Psalm cxix. 62. *At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee*. Notice is here taken of one circumstance, *that the prisoners heard them*. If they did not hear them pray, yet they heard them sing praises. (1.) It intimates how hearty they were in singing praises to God; they sung so loud, that, though they were in the dungeon, yet they were heard all the prison over; nay, so loud, that they waked the prisoners; for we may suppose, being at midnight, they were all asleep: We should sing psalms with all our heart. The faints are called upon to sing aloud upon their beds, Psalm cxliv. 5. But gospel grace carries the matter further, and gives us an example of those that sang aloud in the prison, in the stocks. (2.) Though they knew the prisoners would hear them, yet they sang aloud, as those that were not ashamed of their Master, or of his service. Shall those that would sing psalms in their families, plead, in excuse for their omission of the duty, that they are afraid their neighbours should hear them; when those that sing

profane songs, roar them out, and care not who hears them. (3.) *The prisoners were made to hear the prison songs of Paul and Silas*, that they might be prepared for the miraculous favour shewed to them all, for the sake of Paul and Silas, when *the prison-doors were thrown open*. By this extraordinary comfort which they were filled with, it was published, that he whom they preached was the consolation of Israel. Let the prisoners that mean to oppose him, hear and tremble before him; let those that are faithful to him, hear and triumph, and take of the comfort that is spoken to the prisoners of hope, Zech. ix. 12.

2. God heartened them wonderfully by his signal appearances for them, ver. 26. 1. *There was immediately a great earthquake*; how far it extended we are not told, but it was such a violent shock in this place, that the very foundations of the prison were shaken. While the prisoners were hearkening to the midnight devotions of Paul and Silas, and, perhaps, laughing at them, and making a jest of them, this earthquake would strike a terror upon them, and convince them that those men were the favourites of heaven, and such as God owned. We had the house of prayer shaken, in answer to prayer, and as a token of God's acceptance of it, chap. iv. 31. and here the prison shaken. The Lord was in these earthquakes, to shew his resentment of the indignities done to his servants, to testify to those whose confidence is in the earth, the weakness and instability of that which they confide in, and to teach his people, that though the earth be moved, yet they need not fear. 2. *The prison doors were thrown open, and the prisoners' fetters were knocked off, every man's bands were loosed*: Perhaps, the prisoners, when they heard Paul and Silas pray, and sing psalms, admired them, and spake honourably of them, and said what the damsel had said of them, surely, *these men are the servants of the living God*; and to recompense them for, and confirm them in their good opinion of them, they share in the miracle, and have their bands loosed; as afterwards God gave to Paul all those that were in the ship with him, chap. xxvii. 24. so now he gave him all those that were in the prison with him. God hereby signified to these prisoners (as Grotius observes) that the apostles, in preaching the gospel, were publick blessings to mankind, as they proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound, Isa. lxi. 1. *Et per eos solvi animorum vincula*.

Secondly, The persecutors designed to stop the progress of the gospel, that no more might embrace it; thus they hoped to ruin the meeting by the river-side, that no more hearts should be opened there; but here we find converts made in the prison, that house turned into a meeting, the trophies of the gospel's victories erected there, and the jailor, their own servant, become a servant of Christ. It is probable, some of the prisoners, if not all, were converted; surely the miracle wrought on their bodies, in loosing their bands, was wrought on their souls too; see Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 13. Psalm cvii. 14, 15. but it is only the conversion of the jailor that is recorded.

(1.) He is afraid he shall lose his life, and Paul makes him easy as to that care, ver. 27, 28.

1. He awoke out of his sleep; it is likely, the shock of the earthquake waked him, and the opening of the prison doors, and the prisoners' expressions of joy and amazement, when, in the dark, they found their bands loosed, and called to tell one another what they felt; this was enough to wake the jailor, whose place required that he should not be hard to wake: This waking of him out of his sleep, signified the awakening of his conscience out of his spiritual slumber: The call of the gospel is, *Awake thou that sleepest*, Eph. v. 14. like that, Jonah i. 6.

2. He saw the prison doors open, and supposed, as well he might, that the prisoners were fled, and then what would become of him? He knew the Roman law in that case, and it was executed not long ago upon the keepers, out of whose hands Peter escaped, chap. xii. 19. It was according to that of the prophet, 1 Kings xx. 39, 42. *Keep this man; if he be missing, thy life shall go for his life*. The Roman lawyers, after this, in their readings upon the law, *De custodia rerum*, which appoints, that the keeper should undergo the same punishment that should be inflicted on the prisoner, if he let him escape; take care to except an escape by miracle.

3. In his fright, he drew his sword, and was going to kill himself, to prevent a more terrible death, an expected one, a pompous, ignominious death, which he knew he was liable to, for letting his prisoners escape, and not looking better to them; and the extraordinary strict charge which the magistrates gave him concerning Paul and Silas, made him conclude, they would be very severe upon him if they were gone. The philosophers generally allowed self-murder, Seneca prescribes it as the last remedy which those that are in distress may have recourse to. The Stoicks, notwithstanding their pretended conquest of the passions, yielded thus far to them. And the Epicureans, who indulged the pleasures of sense, to avoid its pains, chose rather to put an end to it. This jailor thought there was no harm in anticipating his own death, but Christianity, by this, proves itself to be of God, that it keeps us to the law of our creation, revives, enforces, and establishes that; obliges us to be just to our own lives, and teacheth us cheerfully to resign them to our graces, but courageously to hold them out against our corruptions.

4. Paul stopped him from his proceeding against himself, ver. 28. He cried with a loud voice, not only to make him hear, but to make him heed, saying, *Do not practise any evil to thyself, do thyself no harm*. All the cautions of the word of God against sin, and all appearances of it, and approaches to it, have this tendency, *Do thyself no harm*: Man, woman, do not wrong thyself, nor ruin thyself; hurt not thyself, and then none else can hurt thee; do not sin, for nothing but that can hurt thee: Even as to the body, we are cautioned against those sins which do harm to that, and are taught not to hate our own flesh, but to nourish and cherish it. The jailor need not fear being called to an account for the escape of his prisoners, for they are all here. It was strange that some of them did not slip away when the prison doors were opened, and they were loosed from their bands; but their amazement held them fast, and, being sensible it was by the prayers of Paul and Silas that they were loosed, they would not stir unless they stirred; and God shewed his power in binding their spirits, as much as in loosing their feet.

(2.) He is afraid he shall lose his soul, and Paul makes him easy as to that care too: One concern leads him to the other, and a much greater; and, being hindered from hastening himself out of this world, he begins to think, if he had pursued his intention, whither death would have brought him; and what would have become of him on the other side death: A very proper thought for such as have been snatched as a brand out of the fire, when there was but a step between them and death: And, perhaps, the heinousness of the sin he was running into, helped to alarm him.

1. Whatever was the cause, he was put into a mighty consternation; the Spirit of God, that was sent to convince, in order to his being a comforter, struck a terror upon him, and startled him; whether he took care to shut the prison doors again, we are not told; perhaps, he forgot that, as the woman of Samaria, when Christ had impressed convictions on her conscience, left her water-pot, and forgot her errand to the well; for he called for a light with all speed, and sprang in to the inner prison, and came trembling to Paul and Silas. Those that have sin set in order before them, and are made to know their abominations, cannot but tremble at the apprehension of their misery and danger. This jailor, when he was thus made to tremble, could not apply himself to a more proper person than to Paul, for it had once been his own case; he had been a persecutor of good men, as this jailor was; had cast them into prison, as he kept them; and when, like him, he was made sensible of it, he trembled, and was astonished; and therefore was able to speak the more feelingly to the jailor.

2. In this consternation he applied himself to Paul and Silas for relief. Observe,

(1.) How reverent and respectful his address to them is; he called for a light, because they were in the dark, and that they might see what a fright he was in: He fell down before them, as one amazed at the badness of his own condition, and ready to sink under the load of his terror because of it; he fell down before them, as one that had upon his spirit an awe of them, and of the image of God upon them, and of their commission from God. It is likely, he had heard what the damsel said of them, that they were the servants of the living God, which shewed to them the way of salvation, and, as such, he thus expressed his veneration for them: He fell down before them, to beg their pardon, as a penitent, for the indignities he had done them, and to beg their advice, as a suppliant, what he should do: He gave them a title of respect, sirs, *κύριοι*, lords, masters; it was but now, rogues, and villains, and he was their master; but now, sirs, lords, and they are his masters. Converting grace changes peoples language of and to good people, and good ministers; and to those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, the very feet of those are beautiful that bring tidings of Christ; yea, though they are disgracefully fastened in the stocks.

(2.) How serious his enquiry is; *What must I do to be saved?* 1. His salvation is now his great concern, and lies nearest his heart, which before was the furthest thing in his thoughts: Not, *What shall I do to be preferred?* to be rich and great in the world? but, *What shall I do to be saved?* 2. He doth not enquire concerning others, what they must do; but concerning himself, *What must I do?* It is his own precious soul that he is in care about; let others do as they please, tell me, *what I must do*, what course I must take. 3. He is convinced that something must be done, and done by him too, in order to his salvation; that it is not a thing of course, a thing that will do itself, but a thing about which we must strive, and wrestle, take pains: He asks not, *What may be done for me?* but, *What shall I do?* that, being now in fear and trembling, I may work out my salvation? as Paul speaks in his epistle to the church at Philippi, of which this jailor was, perhaps, with respect to his trembling enquiry here; intimating, that he must not only ask after his salvation, as he had done; but work out his salvation with a holy trembling, Phil. ii. 12. 4. He is willing to do any thing; tell me *what must I do*, and I am here ready to do it. Sirs, put me into any way, if it be but the right way, and a sure way, though narrow, and thorny, and up-hill, yet I will walk in it. Note, Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will surrender up in

discretion to Jesus Christ, will give him a blank to write what he pleaseth, will be glad to have Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. 5. He is inquisitive what he should do, is desirous to know what he should do, and asks those that were likely to tell him: *If ye will enquire, enquire ye*, Isa. xxii. 11. They that set their faces Sion-ward, must ask the way thither, *Jer. l. 5*. We cannot know it of ourselves, but God has made it known to us by his word, has appointed his ministers to assist us in consulting the scriptures, and has promised to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him, to be their guide in the way of salvation. 6. He brought them out, to put this question to them, that their answer might not be by duress, or compulsion, but they might prescribe to him, though he was their keeper, with the same liberty as they did to others: He brings them out of the dungeon, in hopes they would bring him out of a much worse.

3. They very readily directed him what he must do, *ver. 31*. They were always ready to answer such enquiries; though they are cold, and sore, and sleepy, they do not adjourn this cause to a more convenient time and place, do not bid him come to them the next sabbath at the meeting-place by the river-side, and they will tell him, but they strike while the iron is hot, take him now when he is in a good mind, lest the conviction should wear off; now God begins to work, it is time for them to set in as workers together with God. They do not upbraid him with his rude and ill carriage towards them, and his going beyond his warrant; all this is forgiven, and forgotten, and they are as glad to shew him the way to heaven, as the best friend they have. They did not triumph over him though he trembled; they gave him the same directions they did to others, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. One would think they should have said, repent of thy abusing us in the first place: No, that is over-looked and easily passed by, if he will but believe in Christ. This is an example to ministers to encourage penitents, to meet those that are coming to Christ, and take them by the hand; not to be hard upon any for unkindnesses done to them; but to seek Christ's honour more than their own. Here is the sum of the whole gospel, the covenant of grace in a few words, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. Here is,

1. The happiness promised; *Thou shalt be saved*: not only rescued from eternal ruin, but brought to eternal life and blessedness. Thou, though a poor man, an under-jaylor, or turn-key, mean and of low condition in the world, yet that shall be no bar to thy salvation. Thou, though a great sinner, though a persecutor, yet thy heinous transgressions shall be all forgiven, through the merits of Christ; and thy hard embittered heart shall be softened and sweetened by the grace of Christ; and thus thou shalt neither die for thy crime, nor die of thy disease.

2. The condition required; *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We must admit the record that God hath given in his gospel concerning his Son, and assent to it as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance. We must approve the method God has taken of reconciling the world to himself by a Mediator; and accept of Christ as he is offered to us, and give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. This is the only way, and a sure way to salvation. No other way of salvation but by Christ, and no other way of our being saved by Christ but by believing in him; and no danger of coming short, if we take this way; for it is the way that God has appointed, and he is faithful that has promised; it is the gospel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that believes shall be saved*.

3. The extent of this to his family; *Thou shalt be saved, and thy house*; i. e. God will be in Christ a God to thee and to thy seed, as he was to Abraham. Believe, and salvation shall come to thy house, as Luke xix. 9. Those of thy house that are infants, shall be admitted into the visible church with thee, and thereby put into a fair way for salvation; those that are grown up shall have the means of salvation brought to them, and be they never so many, let them believe in Jesus Christ, and they shall be saved; they are all welcome to Christ upon the same terms.

4. They proceeded to instruct him and his family in the doctrine of Christ, *ver. 32*. They spake unto him the word of the Lord. He was, for ought appears, an utter stranger to Christ, and therefore it is requisite he should be told who this Jesus is, that he may believe in him, John ix. 36. And the substance of the matter lying in a little compass, they soon told him enough to make his being baptized a reasonable service. Christ's ministers should have the word of the Lord so ready to them, and so richly dwelling in them, as to be able to give instructions off-hand, to any that desire to hear and receive it, for their direction in the way of salvation. They spake the word not only to him, but to all that were in his house. Masters of families should take care that all under their charge partake of the means of knowledge and grace, and that the word of the Lord be spoken to them; for the souls of the poorest servants, are as precious as those of their masters, and are bought with the same price.

5. The jaylor and his family were immediately baptized, and thereby took upon them the profession of Christianity, submitted to its laws, and were admitted to its privileges, upon their declaring solemnly as the eunuch did, that they believed that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; he was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Neither

he nor any of his family desired time to consider, whether they should come into baptismal bonds or no; nor did Paul and Silas desire time to try their sincerity, and to consider whether they should baptize them or no. But the Spirit of grace worketh such a strong faith in them; all on a sudden, as superseded further debate, and Paul and Silas knew by the Spirit, that it was a work of God that was wrought in them: so that there was no occasion for demur. This therefore will not justify such precipitation in ordinary cases.

6. The jaylor was hereupon very respectful to Paul and Silas, as one that knew not how to make amends for the injury he had done to them, much less for the kindness he had received from them; he took them the same hour of the night, would not let them lie a minute longer in the inner prison; but, 1. He washed their stripes to cool them, and abate the smart of them; to clean them, from the blood which the stripes had fetched, it is probable he bathed them with some healing liquor; as the good Samaritan helped the wounded man by pouring in oil and wine. 2. He brought them into his house, bid them welcome to the best room he had, and prepared his best bed for them. Now nothing was thought good enough for them, as before nothing bad enough. 3. He set meat before them, such as his house would afford, and they were welcome to it; by which he expressed the welcome which his soul gave to the gospel. They had spoken to him the word of the Lord, had broken the bread of life to him and his family, and he having reaped so plentifully of their spiritual things, he thought it was but reasonable that they should reap of his carnal things, 1 Cor. ix. 11. What have we houses and tables for, but as we have opportunity to serve God and his people with them?

7. The voice of rejoicing with that of salvation was heard in the jaylor's house; never was such a truly merry night kept there before; he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house: There was none in his house that refused to be baptized, and so made a jar in the harmony; but they were unanimous in embracing the gospel, which added much to the joy. Or, it may be read, he believing in God, rejoiced all the house over; *παροικὸν*; he went to every apartment expressing his joy. Observe, 1. His believing in Christ is called believing in God; which intimates that Christ is God, and that the design of the gospel is so far from being to draw us from God, saying, *Go serve other gods*, Deut. xiii. 2. that it has a direct tendency to bring us to God. 2. His faith produced joy; they that by faith have given up themselves to God in Christ as theirs, have a great deal of reason to rejoice: The eunuch when he was converted, went on his way rejoicing; and here the jaylor rejoiced. The conversion of the nations is spoken of in the Old Testament as their rejoicing, *Psal. lxxvii. 4. xcvi. 11*. For believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Believing in Christ, is rejoicing in Christ. 3. He signified his joy to all about him; out of the abundance of the joy in his heart, his mouth spake to the glory of God, and their encouragement who believed in God too. Those who have themselves tasted the comforts of religion, should do what they can to bring others to the taste of them. One cheerful Christian should make many.

35. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. 36. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38. And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. 39. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 40. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

In these verses we have,

First, Orders sent for the discharge of Paul and Silas out of prison; *ver. 35, 36*.

1. The magistrates that had so basely abused them the day before gave the orders; and their doing it so early, as *just as it was day*, intimates that either they were sensible the terrible earthquake they felt at midnight was intended to plead the cause of their prisoners, or their consciences had smitten them for what they had done, and made them very uneasy; while the persecuted were lying in the stocks, the persecutors were full of tossing too and no upon their beds, through anguish of mind, complaining more of the lashes of their consciences, than the prisoners did of the lashes on their backs; and more in haste to give them a discharge than they were to petition for one. Now God made his servants to be hated of them that had carried them captives, *Psal. cv. 40*. The magistrates sent *ἀγγέλους*, those that had the rods, the vergers, the tipstaves, the beadles, those that had been employed in beating them, that they

might go and ask them forgiveness. The order was, *Let those men go*. It is probable they designed further mischief to them, but God turned their hearts, and as he had made their *wrath* hitherto to *praise him*, so the remainder thereof he did restrain. *Psal. lxxvi. 10.*

2. The jailor brought them the news, *ver. 36. The magistrates have sent to let you go*. Some think the jailor had betimes transmitted an account to the magistrates of what had passed in his house that night, and so had obtained this order for the discharge of his prisoners. *Now therefore depart*. Not that he was desirous to part with them as his guests, but as his prisoners; they shall still be welcome to his house, but is glad they are at liberty from his stocks. God could by his grace as easily have converted the magistrates as the jailor, and have brought them to faith and baptism, but God hath *chosen the poor of this world*, James ii. 5.

Secondly, Paul's insisting upon the *breach of privilege*, which the magistrates had been guilty of, *ver. 37*. Paul said to the sergeants, *They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, against all law and justice, and now do they thrust us out privily?* and think to make us amends with that, for the injury done us? *Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out*, and own that they have done us wrong. It is probable the magistrates had some intimation that they were Romans, and were made sensible that their fury had carried them further than the law could bear them out; and that was the reason they gave orders for their discharge. Now observe,

1. Paul did not plead this before he was beaten, though it is probable it might have prevented it, lest he should seem to be afraid of suffering for the truth which he had preached. Tully, in one of his orations, against Verres, tells of one Ganius, that was ordered by Verres, to be beaten in Sicily, that all the while he was under the lash he cried out nothing, but *Civis Romanus sum, I am a citizen of Rome*; Paul did not do so; he had nobler things than that to comfort himself with in his affliction.

2. He did plead it after, to put an honour upon his sufferings, and upon the cause he suffered for, to let the world know that the preachers of the gospel were not such despicable men as they were commonly looked upon to be, and that they merited better treatment. He did it likewise to mollify the magistrates towards the Christians at Philippi, and to gain better treatment for them, and beget in the people a better opinion of the Christian religion, when they saw that Paul had a fair advantage against their magistrates, might have brought his action against them, and had them called to an account for what they had done, and yet did not take the advantage, which was very much to the honour of *that worthy name by which he was called*. Now here,

1. Paul lets them know *how many ways* they had run themselves into a premunire, and that he had law enough to know it. 1. They had *beaten them* that were Romans; some think Silas was a Roman citizen as well as Paul; others, that that doth not necessarily follow, Paul was a citizen, and Silas was his companion. Now both the *lex Porcia*, and the *lex Sempronia* did expressly forbid *liberum corpus Romani civis, virgis aut aliis, verberibus caedi*. Roman historians give instances of cities that had their charters taken from them for indignities done to Roman citizens, we shall afterwards find Paul making use of this plea, *chap. xxii. 25, 26*. To tell them that they had beaten them that were the messengers of Christ, and the favourites of heaven, would have had no influence upon them, but to tell them they have abused Roman citizens will put them into a fright; so common is it for people to be more afraid of Cesar's wrath than of Christ's. He that affronts a Roman, a gentleman, a nobleman, though ignorantly, and through mistake, thinks himself concerned to cry *peccavi* and make his submission, but he that persecutes a Christian because he belongs to Christ, stands to it, and thinks he may do it securely, though God hath said, *he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*, and Christ has warned us of the danger of *offending his little ones*. 2. They had beaten them *uncondemned*; *indicta causa*, had not allowed them a fair hearing, had not *calmly* examined what was said against them, much less enquired what they had to say for themselves. It is a universal rule of justice, *causa cognita possunt multi absolvi, incognita nemo condemnari potest*. Christ's servants could not have been abused as they have been, if they and their cause might but have had an impartial trial. 3. It was an aggravation of this that they had done it openly, which as it was so much the great disgrace to the sufferers, so it was the bolder defiance to justice and the law. 4. They had *cast them into prison*, without shewing any cause of their commitment, and in an arbitrary manner by a verbal order. 5. They now *thrust them out privily*; they had not indeed the impudence to stand by what they had done, but yet had not the honesty to own themselves in a fault.

2. He insists upon it, that they should make them an acknowledgment of their error, and give them a publick discharge, to make that the more honourable, as they had done them a publick disgrace which made that the more *disgraceful*. *Let them come themselves and fetch us out*, and give a testimony to our innocency, and that we have done nothing worthy of stripes or of bonds. It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus stiffly upon, but a point of justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause; let them come and stop the clamours of the people, by confessing that we are not *the troublers of the city*.

Thirdly, The magistrates submission, and the reversing of the judgment given against Paul and Silas, *ver. 38, 39*.

1. The magistrates were frightened when they were told (though it may be they knew it before) that Paul was a Roman. They feared when they heard it, lest some of his friends should inform the government what they had done, and they should fare the worse for it. The proceedings of persecutors have often been illegal, even by the laws of nations, and often inhumane against the law of nature, but always sinful and against God's law.

2. They came and *besought them* not to take the advantage of the law against them, but he overlooks the illegality of what they had done, and says no more of it; they *brought them out* of the prison, owning that they were wrongfully put into it, and desired them that they would peaceably and quietly *depart out of the city*. Thus Pharaoh and his servants that had set God and Moses at defiance, came to Moses and *bowed down themselves to him, saying, Get thee out*, *Exod. xi. 8*. God can make the enemies of his people *ashamed of their envy*, and enmity to them, *Isa. xxvi. 11*. Jerusalem is sometimes made a burthensome stone to them that heave at it, which they would gladly get clear of, *Zech. xii. 3*. Yet if the repentance of these magistrates had been sincere, they would have desired them not to *depart out of their city*, as the Gadarens desired to be rid of Christ, but would have courted their stay, and begged of them to continue in their city, to shew them the way of salvation. But many are convinced that Christianity is not to be persecuted, who yet are not convinced that it ought to be embraced, or at least are not persuaded to embrace it. They are compelled to do honour to Christ and his servants, *to worship before their feet, and to know that he has loved them*, *Rev. iii. 9*. and yet do not go so far as to have benefit by Christ, or to come in for a share in his love.

Fourthly, The departure of Paul and Silas from Philippi, *ver. 40*. They *went out of the prison* when they were legally discharged, and not till then, though they were illegally committed, and then,

1. They took leave of their friends; they *went to the house of Lydia*, where probably the disciples had met to pray for them, and there they *saw the brethren*, or, visited them at their respective habitations; which was soon done, they were so few, and they *comforted them*, by telling them (saith an ancient Greek commentary) what God had done for them, and how he had owned them in the prison. They encouraged them to keep close to Christ, and hold fast the profession of their faith, whatever difficulties they might meet with, assuring them, that all would then end well, everlastingly well: Young converts should have a great deal said to them to comfort them, for the *joy of the Lord* will be very much *their strength*.

2. They quitted the town; they departed. I wonder they should do so; for now they had had such an honourable discharge from their imprisonment, sure they might have gone on at least for some time in their work without danger; but I suppose they went away upon that principle of their Master's, *Mark, i. 38. Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth*. Paul and Silas had an extraordinary call to Philippi, and yet when they were come there they see little of the fruit of their labours, and are soon driven thence; but yet they did not come in vain, though the beginnings here were *small*, the *latter end greatly increased*; now they laid the foundation of a church at Philippi which became very eminent; had its bishops and people that were more generous to Paul than any other church, as appears by his epistle to the Philippians, *chap. i. 1. iv. 15*. Let not ministers be discouraged, though they see not the fruit of their labours presently; the seed sown seems to be lost under the clods, but it shall come up again in a plentiful harvest in due time.

C H A P. XVII.

We have here a further account of the travels of Paul, and his services and sufferings for Christ. He was not like a candle upon a table, that gives light only to one room, but like the sun that goes its circuit to give light to many. He was called into Macedonia, a large kingdom, chap. xvi. 9. He began with Philippi, because it was the first city he came to: But he must not confine himself to that. We have him here, (1.) Preaching and persecuted at Thessalonica, another city of Macedonia, ver. 1,—9. (2.) Preaching at Berea, where he met with an encouraging auditory, but was driven thence also by persecution; ver. 10,—15. (3.) Disputing at Athens, the famous university of Greece, ver. 16,—21. and the account he gave of natural religion, for the conviction of those that were addicted to polytheism, and idolatry and to lead them to the Christian religion, ver. 22,—31. together with the success of this sermon, ver. 32,—34.

1. **N**OW when they had passed through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. 2. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3. Opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the

the dead : and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. 4. And some of them believed, and comforted with Paul and Silas : and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5. ¶ But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an upre, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6. And when they found him not, they drew Jason, and certain brethren, unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also ; 7. Whom Jason hath received : and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, that there is another king, *one* Jesus. 8. And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

Paul's two epistles to the Thessalonians, the two first he wrote by inspiration, give such a shining character of that church, that we cannot but be glad here in the history to meet with an account of the first founding of the church there.

First, Here is Paul's coming to Thessalonica, which was the chief city of this country, called at this day Salonech, in the Turks dominions. Observe,

1. Paul went on with his work, notwithstanding the ill usage he had met with at Philippi ; he did not *fail*, nor was *discouraged*. He takes notice of this in his first epistle to the church here, *1 Thes. ii. 2. after we were shamefully intreated at Philippi, yet we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God.* The opposition and persecution that he met with, made him the more resolute. None of these things moved him ; he could never have held out, and held on as he did, if he had not been animated by a spirit of power from on high.

2. He did but pass through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, the former a city near Philippi, the latter near Thessalonica ; doubtless he was under divine direction, and was told by the Spirit, who, as the wind, blows where he listeth, what places he should *pass through*, and what he should *rest in*. Apollonia was a city of Illyrium, which, some think, illustrates that of Paul, that he had preached the gospel from Jerusalem, and *round about unto Illyricum*, Rom. xv. 9. *i. e.* to the borders of Illyricum, where he now was : And we may suppose, though he be said only to *pass through* these cities, yet that he stayed so long in them as to publish the gospel there, and to prepare the way for the entrance of other ministers among them, whom he would afterwards send.

Secondly, His preaching to the Jews first, in their synagogue at Thessalonica. He found a synagogue of the Jews there, *ver. 1.* which intimates that one reason why he *passed through* those other cities mentioned, and did not continue long in them, was because there were no synagogues in them. But finding one in Thessalonica, by it he made his entry.

2. It was always his manner to begin with the Jews ; to make them the first offer of the gospel, and not to *turn to the Gentiles* till they had refused it, that their mouths might be stopped from clamouring against him because he preached to the Gentiles, for if they received the gospel, they would cheerfully embrace the new converts ; if they refused it, they might thank themselves if the apostles carried it to those that would bid it welcome. That command of beginning at Jerusalem was justly construed as a direction wherever they came to *begin with the Jews*.

2. He met them in *their synagogue* on the *sabbath-day*, in their place and at their time of meeting, and thus he would pay respect to both. *Sabbaths and solemn assemblies* are always very precious to those to whom Christ is precious, *Psal. lxxxiv. 10.* It is good being in the house of the Lord, on his day. This was Christ's manner, and Paul's manner, and has been the manner of all the saints, the *good old way*, which they have *walked in*.

3. He *reasoned with them out of the scriptures*, they agreed with him to receive the scriptures of the Old Testament, so far they were of a mind, but they *received the scripture*, and therefore thought they had reason to reject Christ. Paul received the scripture, and therefore saw great reason to embrace Christ. It was therefore requisite in order to their conviction that he should by reasoning with them, the Spirit setting in with him, convince them that his inferences from scripture were right, and theirs were wrong. Note, The preaching of the gospel should be both scriptural preaching, and rational, such Paul's was, for he *reasoned out of the scriptures*, we must take the scriptures for our foundation, our oracle, and touchstone, and then reason *out of them*, and upon them, and against those who though they pretend zeal for the scriptures, as the Jews did, yet wrest them to their own destruction. Reason must not be set up in competition with the scripture, but it must be made use of in explaining and applying the scripture.

4. He continued to do this *three sabbath-days* successively. If he could not convince them the first sabbath, he would try the *second* and the *third* ; for *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line*.

God waits for sinners conversion, and so must his ministers ; all the labourers come not into the vineyard at the first hour, no nor at the first call ; nor are wrought upon so suddenly as the jay-lor.

5. The drift and scope of his preaching, and arguing was to prove that *Jesus is the Christ* ; this was that which he opened and alledged, *ver. 3.* He first explained his thesis, and opened the terms, and then *alledged* it and *laid it down*, as that which he would *abide by*, and which he summoned them in God's name to subscribe to. Paul had an admirable method of discourse ; and shewed that he was himself both well apprized of the doctrine he preached, and thoroughly understood it, and that he was fully assured of the truth of it, and therefore he opened it like one that knew it, and alledged it like one that believed it. He shewed them.

1. That it was necessary the Messiah should *suffer and die*, and *rise again*, that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah made it necessary he should. The great objection which the Jews made against Jesus being the Messiah, was his ignominious death and sufferings ; the *cross of Christ* was to the Jews a *stumbling-block*, because it did by no means agree with the idea they had framed of the Messiah ; but Paul here alledgeth and makes it out undeniably, not only that it was possible he might be the Messiah, though he suffered, but that being the Messiah it was *necessary he should suffer* ; he could not otherwise be *made perfect* but by *sufferings* ; for if he had not *died*, he could not have *risen again from the dead*. This was it which Christ himself insisted upon, *Luke xxiv. 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?* And again, *ver. 46. Thus it is written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.* He *must needs have suffered for us*, because he could not otherwise purchase the redemption for us, and he *must needs have risen again*, because he could not otherwise apply the redemption to us.

2. That Jesus is the Messiah ; *this Jesus whom I preach unto you*, and call upon you to believe in, *is Christ*, is the Christ, is the *anointed* of the Lord, is he that should come, and you are to look for no other ; for God has both by his *word* and by his *works* (the two ways of his speaking to the children of men) by the scriptures and by miracles, and the *gift of the Spirit* to make both effectual, born witness to him. Note, 1. Gospel ministers should *preach Jesus* ; that must be their principal subject ; their business is to bring people acquainted with him. 2. That which we are to preach concerning Jesus is that *he is Christ*, and therefore we may hope to be saved by him, and are bound to be ruled by him.

Thirdly, The success of his preaching there, *ver. 4.*

1. Some of the Jews believed, notwithstanding their rooted prejudices against Christ and his gospel, and they comforted with Paul and Silas : They not only associated with them as friends and companions, but they *gave up themselves* to their conduct, as their spiritual guides ; they put themselves into their possession as an inheritance into the possession of the right owner, so the word signifies ; they first *gave themselves to the Lord*, and then to them *by the will of God*, 2 Cor. viii. 5. They clave to Paul and Silas, and attended them wherever they went. Note, They that believe in Jesus Christ, come into communion with his faithful ministers, and consort with them.

2. Many more of the devout Greeks, and of the chief women embraced the gospel. These were proselytes of the gate ; the *godly among the Gentiles*, so the Jews called them ; such, as though they did not submit to the law of Moses, yet renounced idolatry and immorality, worshipped the true God only, and did no man any wrong. These were the *οἱ σεβόμενοι Ἕλληνες*, the worshipping Gentiles ; as in America they call those of the natives that are converted to the faith of Christ, the praying Indians ; these were admitted to join with the Jews in their synagogue worship. Of these a great multitude believed, more of them than of the through-paced Jews, that were wedded to the ceremonial law. And not a few of the chief women of the city, that were devout and had a sense of religion, embraced Christianity. Particular notice is taken of this for an example to the ladies, the chief women, and an encouragement to them to employ themselves in the exercises of devotion, and to submit themselves to the commanding power of Christ's holy religion, in all the instances of it ; for this intimates how acceptable it will be to God, what an honour to Christ, and what great influence it may have upon many, besides the advantages of it to their own souls.

No mention is here made of their preaching the gospel to the Gentile idolaters at Thessalonica, and yet it is certain they did, and that great numbers were converted ; nay, it should seem that of the Gentile converts that church was chiefly composed, though notice is not taken of them here : for Paul writes to the Christians there, as having *turned to God from idols*, *1 Thes. i. 9.* and that at the first entering in of the apostles among them.

Fourthly, The trouble that was given to Paul and Silas at Thessalonica ; wherever they preached, they were sure to be persecuted ; bonds and afflictions did abide them in every city. Observe,

1. Who were the authors of their trouble ; the *Jews which believed not*, that were moved with envy, *ver. 5.* The Jews were in all places the most inveterate enemies to the Christians, especially to those Jews that turned Christians, whom they had a particular spleen against, as deserters. Now see what that di-

vision was which Christ came to *send upon earth*; some of the Jews believed the gospel, and pitied and prayed for those that did not; while those that did not envied and hated those that did. St. Paul in his epistle to this church takes notice of the rage and enmity of the Jews against the preachers of the gospel, as their measure-filling tin, 1 Thes. ii. 15, 16.

2. Who were the instruments of the trouble; the Jews made use of *certain lewd persons of the baser sort*, whom they picked up and got together, and who must undertake to give the sense of the city against the apostles. All wise and sober people looked upon them with respect, and valued them, and none would appear against them, but such as were the scum of the city, a parcel of vile scoundrels, that were given to all manner of wickedness. Tertullian pleads this with those that opposed Christianity, that the enemies of it, were generally the worst of men; *tales semper nobis infecutores, injusti, impii, turpes quos & ipsi damnare consueverunt*. Apol. c. 5. It is the honour of religion, that those who hate it are generally the *lewd fellows of the baser sort*, that are lost to all sense of justice and virtue.

3. In what method they proceeded against them.

1. They *set the city in an uproar*; made a noise to put people in a fright, and then every body ran to see what the matter was; they began a riot, and then the mob was up presently. See who are the troublers of Israel, not the faithful preachers of the gospel, but the enemies of it. See how the devil carries on his designs, he sets cities in an uproar, sets souls in an uproar, and then fisheth in troubled waters.

2. They *assaulted the house of Jason*, where the apostles lodged, with a design to *bring them out to the people*, whom they had incensed and enraged against them, and by whom they hoped to see them pulled to pieces. The proceedings here were altogether illegal; if Jason's house must be searched, it ought to be done by the proper officers, and not without a warrant: A man's house (the law saith) is *his castle*, and for them in a tumultuous manner to assault a man's house to put him and his family in fear, was but to shew what outrages men are carried to by a *spirit of persecution*. If men have offended, magistrates are appointed to enquire into the offence, and to judge of it; but to make the rabble judges and executioners too, as these here designed to do, was to make *truth fall in the street*, to set *servants on horseback* and *princes to walk as servants on the earth*; to depose equity, and enthrone fury.

3. When they could not get the apostles into their hands, whom they would have punished as vagabonds, and incensed the people against, as strangers that came to *spy out the land*, and *devour its strength*, and eat the bread out of their mouths; then they fall upon an honest citizen of their own, who entertained the apostles in his house, his name Jason, a converted Jew, and drew him out with some other of the brethren to the rulers of the city. The apostles were advised to withdraw, for they were more obnoxious, *currenti cede furori*. But their friends were willing to expose themselves, being better able to weather this storm. *For a good man, for such good men as the apostles were, some would even dare to die*.

4. They accused them to the rulers, and represented them as dangerous persons not fit to be tolerated; the crime charged upon Jason is, receiving and harbouring the apostles, *ver. 7.* countenancing them, and promoting their interest: And what was the apostles crime, that it should be no less than misprision of treason to give them lodging? Two very black characters are here given them, enough to make them *odious* to the people, and *obnoxious* to the magistrates, if they had been just.

1. That they were *enemies to the publick peace*, and threw every thing into disorder wherever they came; *those that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also*. In one sense it is true, that wherever the gospel comes in its power to any place, to any soul, it works such a change there, gives such a wide change to the stream, so directly contrary to what it was, that it may be said to *turn the world upside down* in that place, in that soul. The love of the world is rooted out of the heart; and the way of the world contradicted in the life; so that the *world is turned upside down there*. But in the sense in which they meant it, it is utterly false: They would have it thought, that the preachers of the gospel were incendiaries, and mischief-makers wherever they came; that they sowed discord among relations, set neighbours together by the ears, obstructed commerce, and inverted all order and regularity. Because they persuaded people to turn from vice to virtue; from idols to the living and true God; from malice and envy to love and peace; they are charged with *turning the world upside down*, when it was only the kingdom of the devil in the world that they thus overturned. Their enemies *set the city in an uproar*, and then laid the blame upon them; as *Nero set Rome on fire*, and then charged it upon the Christians. If Christ's faithful ministers, even those that are most *quiet in the land*, be thus invidiously misrepresented and miscalled, let them not think it strange, or be exasperated by it, we are not better than Paul and Silas, who were thus abused. The accusers cry out, they are *come hither also*; they have been doing all the mischief they could in other places, and now they have brought the infection hither; it is therefore time for us to bestir ourselves, and make head against them.

2. That they were *enemies to the established government*, and disaffected to that, and their principles and practices were destructive

to monarchy, and inconsistent with the constitution of the state, *ver. 7.* They all *do contrary to the decrees of Cesar*; not to any particular decree, for there was as yet no law of the empire against Christianity; but contrary to Cesar's power in general to *make decrees*; for they say, *there is another king, one Jesus*; not only a *King of the Jews*, as our Saviour was himself charged before Pilate, but *Lord of all*; so Peter called him in the first sermon he preached to the Gentiles, *Acts x. 36.* It is true the Roman government, both while it was a commonwealth, and after it came into the Cæsars hands, was very jealous of any governor under their dominions, taking upon him the title of *king*, and there was an express law against it: But *Christ's kingdom was not of this world*. His followers said indeed, that *Jesus is a king*, but not an *earthly king*, not a rival with Cesar, nor his ordinances interfering with the decrees of Cesar, but who had made it a law of his kingdom, to *render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's*. There was nothing in the doctrine of Christ that tended to the dethroning of princes, or the depriving them of any of their prerogatives; and they knew it very well, and it was against their conscience that they laid this to their charge. And of all people, it ill became the Jews to do it, who hated Cesar and his government, and sought the ruin of him and it, and who expected a Messiah that should be a temporal prince, and overturn the thrones of kingdoms, and were therefore opposing our Lord Jesus, because he did not appear under that character. Thus they have been most spiteful in representing God's faithful people as enemies to Cesar, and *hurtful to kings and provinces*, who have been themselves setting up *imperium in imperio*, a power not only in competition with Cesar's, but superior to it, that of the papal supremacy.

4. The great uneasiness which this gave to the city, *ver. 8.* They troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. They had no ill opinion of the apostles, or their doctrine, could not apprehend any danger to the state from them; and therefore were willing to connive at them; but if they be represented to them by the prosecutors as enemies to Cesar, they will be obliged to take cognizance of them, and to suppress them, for fear of the government, and this troubled them. Claudius, the present emperor, is represented by Suetonius as a man very jealous of the least commotion, and timorous to the last degree, which obliged the rulers under him to be watchful against every thing that looked dangerous, or gave the least cause of suspicion; and therefore it troubled them to be brought under a necessity of disturbing good men.

5. The issue of this troublesome affair; the magistrates had no mind to prosecute the Christians; care was taken to secure the apostles, they absconded, and fled, and kept out of their hands; so that nothing was to be done, but to discharge Jason and his friends upon bail, *ver. 9.* The magistrates here were not so easily incensed against the apostles, as the magistrates at Philippi were, but were more considerate, and of better temper; so they *took security of Jason and the other*, bound them to their good behaviour; and, perhaps, they gave bond for Paul and Silas that they should be forthcoming when they were called for, if any thing should afterwards appear against them.

Among the persecutors of Christianity, as there have been instances of the madness and rage of brutes, so there have been likewise of the prudence and temper of men; moderation has been a virtue.

10. ¶ And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither*, went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12. Therefore many of them believed: also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few. 13. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15. And they that conducted Paul, brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus, for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

In these verses we have,

First, Paul and Silas removing to Berea, and employed in preaching the gospel there, *ver. 10.* They had gone so far at Thessalonica, that the foundations of a church were laid, and others were raised up to carry on the work that was begun, whom the rulers and people were not so much prejudiced against, as they were against Paul and Silas; and therefore when the storm rose they withdrew, taking that as an indication to them that they must quit that place for the present. That command of Christ to his disciples, *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another*; intends their flight to be not so much for their own safety, flee to another to hide there, as for the *carrying on of their work*; flee to another to preach there,

there, as appears by the reason given, for you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come, Mat. x. 23. Thus out of the eater, came forth meat, and the devil was out-shot in his own bow; he thought by persecuting the apostles, to stop the progress of the gospel; but it was so over-ruled, as to be made to further it. See here,

1. The care that the brethren took of Paul and Silas, when they perceived how the plot was laid against them; they immediately sent them away by night, incognito, to Berea: This could be no surprize to the young converts, for when we were with you (saith Paul to them, 1 Thess. iii. 9.) when we came first among you, we told you that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know. It should seem, that Paul and Silas would willingly have stayed and faced the storm, if the brethren would have let them; but they would rather want their help, than expose their lives; which, it should seem, were dearer to their friends, than to themselves: They sent them away by night, under the covert of that, as if they had been evil doers.

2. The constancy of Paul and Silas in their work; though they fled from Thessalonica, they did not flee from the service of Christ; when they came to Berea, they went into the synagogue of the Jews, and made their publick appearance there: Though the Jews at Thessalonica had been their spiteful enemies, and, for ought they knew, the Jews at Berea would be so too, yet they did not therefore decline paying their respects to the Jews, either in revenge for the injuries they had received, or for fear of what they might receive. If others will not do their duty to us, yet we ought to do ours to them.

Secondly, The good character of the Jews in Berea, ver. 11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica; the Jews in the synagogue at Berea, were better disposed to receive the gospel, than the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica; they were not so bigotted and prejudiced against it, not so peevish and ill-natured, they were more noble, ευγενέστεροι, better bred, i. e. 1. They had a freer thought, and lay more open to conviction, were willing to hear reason, and admit the force of it, and to subscribe to that which appeared to them to be truth, though it was contrary to their former sentiments; this was more noble. 2. They had a better temper, were not so sour, and morose, and ill-conditioned towards all that were not of their mind: As they were ready to come into a unity with those that, by the power of truth, they were brought to concur with, so they continued in charity with those they saw cause to differ from; this was more noble: They neither prejudiced the cause, nor were moved with envy at the managers of it, as the Jews at Thessalonica were, but very generously gave both it and them a fair hearing, without passion or partiality; for,

1. They received the word with all readiness of mind; they were very willing to hear it, presently apprehended the meaning of it, and did not shut their eyes against the light: They attended to the things that were spoken of Paul, as Lydia did, and were very well pleased to hear them: They did not pick quarrels with the word, nor find fault, nor seek occasion against the preachers of it; but bid it welcome, and put a candid construction upon every thing that was said; herein they were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica, but walked in the same spirit, and in the same steps with the Gentiles there, of whom it is said, that they received the word with joy of the holy Ghost, and turned to God from idols, 1 Thess. i. 5, 9. This was true nobility. The Jews gloried much in their being Abraham's seed, thought themselves well-born, and that they could not be better born: But they are here told, who among them were the most noble, and the best bred men; those that were most disposed to receive the gospel, and had the high and conceited thoughts in them captivated, and brought into obedience to Christ: These were the most noble, and (if I may so say) the most gentlemen-like men. Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus, virtue and piety is true nobility, true honour; and without that (Stemmata quid profunt?) what are pedigrees and pompous titles worth?

2. They searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Their readiness of mind to receive the word, was not such, as that they took things upon trust, swallowed them upon an implicit faith; no; but since Paul reasoned out of the scriptures, and referred them to the Old Testament for the proof of what he said, they had recourse to their bibles, turned to the places he referred them to, read the context, considered the scope and drift of them, compared them with other places of scripture, examined whether Paul's inferences from them were natural and genuine, and his arguments upon them cogent, and determined accordingly. Observe, 1. The doctrine of Christ doth not fear a scrutiny; we that are advocates for his cause, desire no more but that people will not say, these things are not so, till they have first, without prejudice and partiality, examined, whether they be so, or no. 2. The New Testament is to be examined by the Old: The Jews received the Old Testament, and those that did so, if they considered things aright, could not but see cause sufficient to receive the New, because in it they see all the prophecies and promises of the Old fully and exactly accomplished. 3. Those that read and receive the scriptures, must search them, John v. 39. must study them, and take pains in considering them, both that they may find out the truth contained in them, and may not mistake the sense of them,

and so run into error, or remain in it; and that they may find out the whole truth contained in them, and may not rest in a superficial knowledge, in the outward court of the scriptures, but may have an intimate acquaintance with the mind of God revealed in them. 4. Searching the scriptures must be our daily work; they that heard the word in the synagogue on the sabbath-day, did not think that enough, but were searching it every day in the week, that they might improve what they had heard the sabbath before, and prepare for what they were to hear the sabbath after. 5. Those are truly noble, and are in a fair way to be more and more so, that make the scriptures their oracle and touchstone, and consult them accordingly: Those that rightly study the scriptures, and meditate therein day and night, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble principles, and formed for noble aims and designs: These are more noble.

Thirdly, The good effect of the preaching of the gospel at Berea; it had the desired success; the peoples hearts being prepared, a great deal of work was done suddenly, ver. 12.

1. Of the Jews there were many that believed; at Thessalonica there were only some of them that believed, ver. 4. but at Berea, where they heard with unprejudiced minds, many believed; many more Jews than at Thessalonica. Note, God gives grace to those whom he first inclines to make a diligent use of the means of grace, and particularly to search the scriptures.

2. Of the Greeks likewise, the Gentiles, many believed, both of the honourable women, the ladies of quality, and of men not a few, men of the first rank, as should seem by their being mentioned with the honourable women. The wives first embraced the gospel, and then they persuaded their husbands to embrace it: For what knowest thou, O wife, but thou shalt save thy husband? 1 Cor. vii. 16.

Fourthly, The persecution that was raised against Paul and Silas at Berea, which forced Paul thence.

1. The Jews at Thessalonica were the mischief-makers at Berea; they had notice that the word of God was preached at Berea; for envy and jealousy bring quick intelligence; and likewise the Jews there were not so inveterately set against it as they were; they came thither also, to turn the world there, and they stirred up the people, and incensed them against the gospel; as if they had had a commission from the prince of darkness to go from place to place to oppose the gospel, as the apostles had to go from place to place to preach it: Thus we read before that the Jews at Antioch came to Iconium, on purpose to incense the people against the apostles, chap. xiv. 19. See how restless Satan's agents are in their opposition to the glory of Christ, and the salvation of the souls of men! this is an instance of the enmity that is in the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman, and we must not think it strange if persecutors at home extend their rage to stir up persecution abroad.

2. This occasioned Paul's remove to Athens; by seeking to extinguish this divine fire which Christ had already kindled, they did but spread it the further, and the faster; so long Paul stayed at Berea, and such success he had there, that there were brethren there, and sensible, active men too, which appeared by the care they took of Paul, ver. 14. They were aware of the coming of the persecuting Jews from Thessalonica, and that they were busy irritating the people against Paul, and hearing what it would come to, they lost no time, but immediately sent Paul away, whom they were most prejudiced and enraged against, hoping that that would pacify them, while they retained Silas and Timothy there still, who, now Paul had broke the ice, might be sufficient to carry on the work without exposing him. They sent Paul to go even to the sea, so some; to go as it were to the sea, so we read it; ἀσπερί τὴν θάλασσαν, he went out from Berea, in that road which went to the sea, that the Jews, if they enquired after him, might think he was gone far enough, but he went by land to Athens, in which there was no culpable dissimulation at all. They that conducted Paul (as his guide and guard, he being both a stranger in the country, and one that had many enemies) brought him to Athens: The Spirit of God influencing his spirit, directing him to that famous city; famous of old for its power and dominion, when the Athenian commonwealth coped with the Spartan; famous afterwards for learning, it was the rendezvous of scholars; those that wanted learning, went thither to get it, because those that had learning, went thither to shew it: It was a great university, much resorted to from all parts, and therefore, for the better diffusing of gospel light, Paul is sent thither, and is not ashamed or afraid to shew his face among the philosophers there, and there to preach Christ crucified, though he knew it would be as much foolishness to the Greeks, as it was to the Jews a stumbling-block.

3. He ordered Silas and Timothy to come to him to Athens, when he found there was a prospect of doing good there; or, because there being none there that he knew, he was solitary and melancholy without them: Yet, it should seem, that as much haste as he was in for them, he ordered Timothy to go about by Thessalonica, to bring him an account of the affairs of that church; for he saith, 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2. We thought good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timotheus to establish you.

16. ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him : and some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods : because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19. And they took him, and brought him to Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? 20. For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know therefore what these things mean. 21. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)

A scholar that has acquaintance, and is in love with the learning of the ancients, would think he should have been very happy if he were, where Paul now was, at Athens, in the midst of the various sects of philosophers, and would have had a great many curious questions to ask them, for the explicating of the remains we have of the Athenian learning ; but Paul, though bred a scholar, and an ingenious, active man, doth not make that any of his business at Athens, he hath other work to mind ; it is not the improving of himself in their philosophy that he aims at, he has learned to call it a vain thing, and is above it, Col. ii. 8. his business is, in God's name, to correct their disorders in religion, and to turn them from the service of idols, and of Satan in them, to the service of the true and living God in Christ.

First, Here is the impression which the abominable ignorance and superstition of the Athenians made upon Paul's spirit, ver. 16. Observe,

1. The account here given of that city ; it was wholly given to idolatry. This agrees with the account which the heathen writers give of it, that there were more idols in Athens, than there were in all Greece beside put together ; and that they had twice as many sacred feasts as others had. Whatever strange gods were recommended to them, they admitted them, and allowed them a temple, and an altar, so that they had almost as many gods as men ; *facilius possis deum quam hominem invenire*. And this city, after the empire became Christian, continued incurably addicted to idolatry, and all the pious edicts of the Christian emperors could not root it out, till, by the irruption of the Goths, that city was in a particular manner laid waste, and there are now scarce any remains of it. It is observable, that there, where human learning most flourished, idolatry most abounded, and the most absurd and ridiculous idolatry, which confirms that of the apostle, that when they professed themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom. i. 22. and, in the business of religion, were of all other the most vain in their imaginations : *The world by wisdom knew not God*, 1 Cor. i. 21. They might have reasoned against polytheism, and idolatry, but, it seems, the greatest pretenders to reason, were the greatest slaves to idols ; so necessary was it to the re-establishing even of natural religion, that there should be a divine revelation, and that centring in Christ !

2. The disturbance which the sight of this gave to Paul ; Paul was not willing to appear publicly, till Silas and Timothy came to him, that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses the word might be established ; but in the mean time his spirit was stirred within him ; he was filled with concern for the glory of God, which he saw given to idols, and with compassion to the souls of men, which he saw thus enslaved to Satan, and led captive by him at his will : He beheld these transgressors, and was grieved ; and horror took hold of him : He had a holy indignation at the heathen priests, that led the people such an endless trace of idolatry, and at their philosophers, that knew better things, and yet never said a word against it, but themselves went down the stream.

Secondly, The testimony that he bore against their idolatry, and his endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of the truth : He did not (as Witius observes) in the heat of his zeal break into the temples, pull down their images, demolish their altars, or fly in the face of their priests ; nor did he run about the streets crying you are all the bond-slaves of the devil, though it was too true ; but he observed a decorum, and kept himself within due bounds, doing that only which became a prudent man.

1. He went to the synagogue of the Jews, who, though enemies to Christianity, were free from idolatry, and joined with them in that among them which was good, and took the opportunity given him there of disputing for Christ, ver. 17. He discoursed with the Jews, reasoned fairly with them, and put it to them, what reason they could give, why, since they expected the Messiah, they would not receive Jesus. There he met with the devout persons, that had forsaken the idol temples, but rested in the Jews synagogue, and he talked with these to lead them on to the Christian church, to which the Jews synagogue was but as a porch.

2. He entered into conversation with all that came in his way about matters of religion : In the market, ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ, in the exchange, or place of commerce, he disputed daily, as he had occasion, with them that met with him, or, that he happened into company with, that were heathen, and never came to the Jews synagogue. The zealous advocates for the cause of Christ, will be ready to plead it in all companies as occasion offers. The ministers of Christ must not think it enough to speak a good word for Christ once a week, but should be daily speaking honourably of him, to such as meet with them.

Thirdly, The enquiries which some of the philosophers made concerning Paul's doctrine. Observe,

(1.) Who they were that encountered him, that entered into discourse with him, and opposed him ; he disputed with all that met him, in the places of concourse, or rather of discourse ; most took no notice of him, slighted him, and never minded a word he said ; but there were some of the philosophers that thought him worth making remarks upon, and they were those whose principles were most directly contrary to Christianity.

1. The Epicureans, who thought God altogether such a one as themselves, an idle, unactive being, that minded nothing, nor put any difference between good and evil ; they would not own, either that God made the world, or that he governs it ; nor that man needs to make any conscience of what he saith or doth, having no punishment to fear, or rewards to hope for ; all which loose, atheistical notions Christianity is levelled against : The Epicureans indulged themselves in all the pleasures of sense, and placed their happiness in them, in what Christ has taught us in the first place to deny ourselves.

2. The Stoicks, who thought themselves altogether as good as God, and indulged themselves as much in the pride of life, as the Epicureans did in the lusts of the flesh, and of the eye : They made their virtuous men to be no way inferior to God himself, nay, to be superior : *Esse aliquid quo sapiens antecedit Deum*, so Seneca ; to which Christianity is directly opposite, as it teacheth us to deny ourselves, and abase ourselves, and to come off from all confidence in ourselves, that Christ may be all in all.

(2.) What their different sentiments were of him, such there were, as there were of Christ, ver. 18.

1. Some called him a babler, and thought he spoke without any design whatever came uppermost, as men of crazed imaginations do : What will this babler say ? ὁ σπερμαλόγος ἄτος, this scatterer of words, that goes about throwing here one idle word or story, and there another, without any intendment or signification ; or, this picker up of seeds : Some of the critics tell us, it is used for a little sort of bird, that is worth nothing at all, either for the spit, or for the cage, that picks up the seeds that lie uncovered, either in the field, or by the way-side, and hops here and there for that purpose ; *Avicula parva quæ semina in triviis dispersa colligere solet* ; such a pitiful, contemptible animal they took Paul to be ! or supposed he went from place to place, venting his notions, to get money, a penny here, and another there, as that bird picks up here and there a grain : They looked upon him as an idle fellow, and regarded him, as we say, no more than a ballad-singer.

2. Others called him a setter forth of strange gods, and thought he spoke with design to make himself considerable by that means : And if he had strange gods to set forth, he could not bring them to a better market than to Athens : He did not, as many did, directly set forth new gods, nor avowedly ; but they thought he seemed to do so, because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection ; from his first coming among them he ever and anon harped upon these two strings, which are indeed the principal doctrines of Christianity, Christ, and a future state ; Christ our way, and heaven our end ; and though he did not call these gods, yet they thought he meant to make them so : Τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν, Jesus they took for a new god, and anastasis, the resurrection, for a new goddess : Thus they lost the benefit of the Christian doctrine by dressing it up in a pagan dialect, as if believing in Jesus, and looking for the resurrection, were the worshipping of new demons.

(3.) The proposal they made to give him a free, full, fair, and publick hearing, ver. 19, 20. They had heard some broken pieces of his doctrine, and are willing to have a more perfect knowledge of it.

1. They look upon it as strange and surprizing, and very different from the philosophy that had for many ages been taught and professed at Athens : It is a new doctrine, which we do not understand the drift and design of : Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears, which we never heard of before, and know not what to make of now. By this it should seem, that among all the learned books they had, they either had not, or heeded not, the book of Moses, and the prophets, else the doctrine of Christ would not have been so perfectly new and strange to them : There was but one book in the world that was of divine inspiration, and that was the only book they were strangers to ; which, if they would have given a due regard to, would, in its very first page, have determined that great controversy among them about the origin of the universe.

2. They desire to know more of it only because it was new and strange : May we know what this new doctrine is ? Or, is it (like

(like the mysteries of the gods) to be kept as a profound secret? If it may be, *we would gladly know*, and desire thee to tell us, *what these things mean*, that we may be able to pass a judgment upon them. This was a fair proposal; it was fit they should know what this doctrine was, before they embraced it; and they were so fair as not to condemn it, till they had had some account of it.

3. The place *they brought him to*, in order to this publick declaration of his doctrine, it was *to Areopagus*, the same word that is translated, *ver. 22. Mars-hill*; it was the town-house, or guild-hall of their city, where the magistrates met upon publick business, and the courts of justice were kept; and it was as the theatre in the university, or the schools, where learned men met to communicate their notions: The court of justice which sat here was famous for its equity, which drew appeals to it from all parts; if any denied a God, he was liable to the censure of this court; Diagoras was by them put to death, as a contemner of *the gods*; nor might any *new god* be admitted, without their approbation; hither they brought Paul to be tried, not as a criminal, but as a candidate.

(4.) The general character of the people of that city given upon this occasion, *ver. 21. All the Athenians*, that is, natives of the place, and the *strangers* which sojourned *there* for their improvement, *spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing*; which comes in as the reason why they were inquisitive concerning Paul's doctrine, not because it was good, but because it was new. It is a very sorry character, which is here given of the people, yet many transcribe it. 1. They were all for *conversation*; St. Paul exhorts his pupil to *give attendance to reading and meditation*, 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14. but these people despised those old-fashioned ways of getting knowledge, and preferred *that of telling and hearing*: It is true that good company is of great use to a man, and will polish one that has laid a good foundation in study; but that knowledge will be very flashy and superficial, which is got by conversation only. 2. They affected novelty; they were for *telling and hearing some new thing*; they were for new schemes, and new notions in philosophy; new forms and plans of government in politics; and, in religion, for *new gods that came newly up*, Deut. xxxii. 17. new *dæmons*, new-fashioned images, and altars, 2 Kings xvi. 10. they were given to change. Demosthenes, an orator of their own, had charged this upon them long before in one of his Philippicks, that their common question in the markets, or wherever they met, was, *ἢ τί λέγεται νεώτερον*, *if there was any news*. 3. They meddled in other peoples business, and were inquisitive concerning that, and never minded their own: *Tattlers* are always *busy-bodies*, 1 Tim. v. 13. 4. *They spent their time in nothing else*, and a very uncomfortable account they must needs have to make of *their time* who thus spend it: *Time* is precious, and we are concerned to be good husbands of it, because eternity depends upon it, and it is hastening apace into eternity, but abundance of it is wasted in unprofitable converse: *To tell and hear* the new occurrences of providence concerning the publick, in our own or other nations, and concerning our neighbours and friends, is of good use now and then; but to set up for news-mongers, and to *spend our time in nothing else*, is to lose that which is very precious, for the gain of that which is worth little.

22. ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: 25. Neither is worshipped with mens hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26. And hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: 27. That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and mans device. 30. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31. Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that man* whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given as-

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urance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

We have here St. Paul's sermon *at Athens*; divers sermons we have had which the apostles preached to the *Jews*, or such Gentiles as had an acquaintance with, and veneration for the Old Testament, and were worshippers of *the true and living God*; and all they had to do with them, was to open and alledge *that Jesus is the Christ*; but here we have a sermon to heathens, that worshipped false gods, and *were without the true God in the world*, and to them the scope of their discourse was quite different from what it was to the other: In the former case their business was to lead their hearers by prophecies and miracles *to the knowledge of the Redeemer*, and faith in him; in the latter it was to lead them by the common works of providence *to the knowledge of the Creator*, and worship of him: One discourse of this kind we had before to the rude idolaters of Lystra that deified the apostles, *chap. xiv. 15.* this here is to the more polite and refined idolaters *at Athens*, and an admirable discourse it is, and every way suited to his auditory, and the design he had upon them.

First, He lays down this as the scope of his discourse, that he aimed to bring *them to the knowledge of the one only living and true God*, as the sole and proper object of their adoration; he is here obliged to lay the foundation, and to instruct them in the first principle of all religion, that there is a God, and that God is but one. When he preached against the gods they worshipped, he had no design to draw them to atheism, but to the service of the true deity. Socrates, who had exposed the pagan idolatry, was indicted in this very court, and condemned, not only because he did not esteem those to be gods whom the city esteemed to be so, but because he introduced new *dæmons*; and this was the charge against Paul: Now he tacitly owns the former part of the charge, but guards against the latter, by declaring, that he doth not introduce any new gods, but reduce them *to the knowledge of one God, the Ancient of days*. Now,

1. He shews them that they needed to be instructed herein; for they had lost *the knowledge of the true God* that made them, in the worship of false gods that they made; *Deos qui rogat ille facit: I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious*. The crime he chargeth upon them is, *giving that glory to others which is due to God only*; that they feared and worshipped *dæmons*, spirits that they supposed inhabited the images to which they directed their worship. It is time for you to be told, *that there is but one God*, who are multiplying deities above any of your neighbours, and mingle your idolatries with all your affairs: *You are in all things superstitious*, *δεισιδαιμονέστεροι*, you easily admit every thing that comes under shew of religion, but it is that which corrupts it more and more; I bring you that which will reform it. Their neighbours praised them for this as a pious people, but Paul condemns them for it: Yet it is observable how he mollifies the charge, doth not aggravate it to provoke them; he useth a word which among them was taken in a good sense, *You are every way more than ordinary religious*, so some read it; *you are very devout in your way*: Or, if it be taken in an ill sense, it is mitigated; *you are as it were (ὡς) more superstitious than you need be*; and he saith no more than what he himself perceived; *θεωρῶ, I see it, I observe it*. They charged Paul with setting forth new *dæmons*; nay, saith he, you have *dæmons* enow already, I will not add to the number of them.

2. He shews them that they themselves had given a fair occasion for the declaring of *this one true God to them*, by *setting up an altar, To the unknown God*; which intimated an acknowledgment that there was a God, which was yet to them an *unknown God*; and it is sad to think, that at Athens, a place which was supposed to have the monopoly of wisdom, the *true God* was an *unknown God*, the only God that was *unknown*. Now you ought to bid Paul welcome, for *this is the God whom he comes to make known to you, the God whom you implicitly complain that you are ignorant of*. There, where we are sensible we are defective, and come short, just there the gospel takes us up, and carries us on. Various conjectures the learned have concerning *this altar dedicated, To the unknown God*.

(1.) Some think, the meaning is, *To the God whose honour it is to be unknown*, and that they intend *the God of the Jews*, whose name is *ineffable*, and whose nature is *unsearchable*. It is probable, they had heard from the *Jews*, and from the *writings of the Old Testament*, of the God of Israel, who had proved himself to be *above all gods*, but was a God *hiding himself*, Isa. xlv. 15. The heathen called the Jews God, *Deus incertus, incertum Moſis nomen*; and the God without name: Now *this God*, saith Paul, *this God, who cannot by searching be found out to perfection, I now declare unto you*.

(2.) Others think, the meaning is, *To the God whom it is our unhappiness not to know*; which intimates, that they would think it their happiness to know him. Some tell us, that upon occasion of a plague that raged in Athens, when they had sacrificed to all their gods one after another for the staying of the plague, they were advised to let some sheep go where they pleased, and where they lay down to build an altar, *τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ, To the proper God, or the God to whom that affair of staying the pestilence did*

belong;

belong; and, because they knew not how to call him, they inscribed it, *To the unknown God*. Others, from some of the best historians of *Athens*, tell us, they had many altars inscribed, *To the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa, To the unknown God*; and some of the neighbouring countries used to swear by the God that was unknown at *Athens*; so *Lucian*.

Now observe how modestly Paul mentions this; that he might not be thought a spy, or one that had intruded himself more than became a stranger into the knowledge of their mysteries, he tells them that he observed it *as he passed by, and saw their devotions, or their sacred things*; it was publick, and he could not forbear seeing it, and it was proper enough to make his remarks upon the religion of the place; and observe how prudently and ingeniously he takes rise from this to bring in his discourse of the true God: 1. He tells them, that the God he preached to them, was one that they did already worship, and therefore he was not a setter forth of new or strange gods; as you have a dependence upon him, so he has had some kind of homage from you. 2. He was one whom they ignorantly worshipped, which was a reproach to them, who were famous all the world over for their knowledge: Now, faith he, I come to take away that reproach, that you may worship him understandingly, whom now you worship ignorantly; and it cannot but be acceptable to have your blind devotion turned into a reasonable service, that you may not worship ye know not what.

Secondly, He confirms his doctrine of one living and true God by his works of creation and providence; the God whom I declare unto you to be the sole object of your devotion, and call you to the worship of, is the God that made the world, and governs it; and by the visible proofs of these, you may be led to this invisible Being, and be convinced of his eternal power and Godhead. The Gentiles in general, and the Athenians particularly, in their devotions were governed, not by their philosophers, who many of them spoke clearly and excellently well of one supreme numen, and of his infinite perfections, and universal agency and dominion, witness the writings of Plato, and, long after, of Cicero, but by their poets, and their idle fictions; Homer's works were the bible of the pagan theology, or dæmonology rather, not Plato's; and the philosophers tamely submitted to this, rested in their speculations, disputed them among themselves, and taught them their scholars, but never made the use they ought to have made of them in opposition to idolatry; so little certainty were they at concerning them, and so little impression did they make upon them! nay, they run in themselves into the superstition of their country, and thought they ought to do so: *Eamus ad communem errorem*.

Now Paul here sets himself in the first place to reform the philosophy of the Athenians, he corrects the mistakes of that, and to give them right notions of the one only living and true God, and then to carry the matter further than they ever attempted, for the reforming of their worship, and the bringing them off from their polytheism and idolatry. Observe what glorious things Paul here faith of that God whom he served, and would have them to serve:

1. He is the God that made the world, and all things therein; the Father almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. This was admitted by many of the philosophers, but those of Aristotle's school denied it, and maintained, that the world was from eternity, and every thing always was what now it is: Those of the school of Epicurus fancied, that the world was made by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which, having been in a perpetual motion, at length accidentally jumped into this frame: Against both these, Paul here maintains, that God, by the operations of an infinite power, according to the contrivance of an infinite wisdom, in the beginning of time made the world, and all things therein; the rise of which was owing, not, as they fancied, to an eternal matter, but to an eternal mind.

2. He is therefore Lord of heaven and earth, i. e. he is the rightful Owner, Proprietor, and Possessor of all the beings, powers, and riches of the upper and lower world, material and immaterial, visible and invisible: This follows from his making of heaven and earth: If he created all, without doubt he has the disposing of all; and, where he gives being, has an indisputable right to give law.

3. He is, in a particular manner, the Creator of men, of all men, ver. 26. He made of one blood all nations of men; he made the first man, he makes every man, is the former of every man's body, and the father of every man's spirit; he has made the nations of men, not only all men in the nations, but as nations in their political capacity; he is their founder, and disposed them into communities for their mutual preservation and benefit; he made them all of one blood, of one and the same nature, he fashioneth their hearts alike; descended from one and the same common ancestor, in Adam they are all akin, so they are in Noah, that hereby they might be engaged in mutual affection and assistance, as fellow-creatures and brethren: Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us? Mal. ii. 10. He hath made them for to dwell on all the face of the earth, which, as a bountiful benefactor, he has given, with all its fulness, to the children of men. He made them not to live in one place, but to be dispersed over all the earth; one nation therefore ought not to look with contempt upon another, as the Greeks did upon all other nations; for those on all the face of the earth are of the same blood: The Athenians boasted that they

sprang out of their own earth, were *aborigines*, and nothing akin by blood to any other nation, which proud conceit of themselves the apostle here takes down.

4. That he is the great benefactor of the whole creation, ver. 25. He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; he not only breathed into the first man the breath of life, but still breathes it into every man; he gave us these souls, he formed the spirit of man within him; he not only gave us our life and breath, when he brought us into being, but he is continually giving it us; his providence is a continued creation; he holds our souls in life; every moment our breath goes forth, but he graciously gives it us again the next moment; it is not only his air that we breathe in, but it is in his hand that our breath is, Dan. v. 23. He gives to all the children of men their life and breath; for as the meanest of the children of men live upon him, and receive from him, so the greatest, the wisest philosophers, and mightiest potentates, cannot live without him; he gives to all, not only to all the children of men, but to the inferior creatures, to all animals, every thing wherein is the breath of life, Gen. vii. 17. they have their life and breath from him; and where he gives life and breath, he gives all things, all other things needful for the support of life: The earth is full of his goodness, Psalm civ. 24, 27.

5. That he is the sovereign disposer of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his will, ver. 26. He hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. See here, 1. The sovereignty of God's disposal concerning us; he hath determined every event, before, the matter is fixed; the disp. als of providence are uncontestable, and must not be disputed; unchangeable, and cannot be altered. 2. The wisdom of his disposals; he hath determined what was before appointed; the determination of his eternal mind are not sudden resolves, but the counterparts of an eternal counsel, the copies of divine decrees: He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, Job xxiii. 14. Whatever comes forth from God, was before all worlds hid in God. 3. The things about which his providence is conversant; these are time and place; the times and places of our living in this world, are determined and appointed by the God that made us. (1.) He has determined the times that are concerning us; times to us seem changeable, but God has fixed them: Our times are in his hand, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten, as he pleaseth: He has appointed and determined the time of our coming into the world, and the time of our continuance in the world; our time to be born, and our time to die (Eccles. iii. 1.) and all that little that lies between them; the time of all our concerns in this world, whether they be prosperous times, or calamitous times, it is he that hath determined them; and on him we must depend, with reference to the times that are yet before us. (2.) He has also determined and appointed the bounds of our habitation; he that appointed the earth to be a habitation for the children of men, has appointed to the children of men a distinction of habitations upon the earth, has instituted such a thing as property, to which he has set bounds to keep us from trespassing one upon another: The particular habitations in which our lot is cast, the place of our nativity, and of our settlement, are of God's determining and appointing, which is a reason why we should accommodate ourselves to the habitations we are in, and make the best of that which is.

6. That he is not far from every one of us, ver. 27. He is every where present, not only is at our right hand, but hath possessed our reins, Psalm cxxxix. 43. hath his eye upon us at all times, and knows us better than we know ourselves. Idolaters made images of God, that they might have him with them in those images, which the apostle here shews the absurdity of; for he is an infinite Spirit, that is not far from any of us, and never the nearer, but in one sense the further off from us, for our pretending to realize or presentiate him to ourselves by an image: He is nigh unto us, both to receive the homage we render him, and to give the mercies we ask of him, wherever we are, though near no altar, image, or temple. The Lord of all, as he is rich, Rom. x. 12. so he is nigh (Deut. iv. 7.) to all that call upon him: He that wills us to pray every where, assures us, that he is no where far from us; whatever country, nation, or profession we are of, whatever our rank and condition in the world is, be we in a palace, or in a cottage, in a crowd, or in a corner, in a city, or in a desert, in the depths of the sea, or afar off upon the sea, this is certain, God is not far off from every one of us.

7. That in him we live, and move, and have our being, ver. 28. we have a necessary and constant dependence upon his providence, as the streams have upon the spring, and the beams upon the sun. 1. In him we live, i. e. the continuance of our lives is owing to him, and the constant influence of his providence; he is our life, and the length of our days: It is not only owing to his patience and pity that our forfeited lives are not cut off, but it is owing to his power, and goodness, and fatherly care, that our frail lives are prolonged; there needs not a positive act of his wrath to destroy us, if he suspend the positive acts of his goodness we die of ourselves. 2. In him we move; it is by the uninterrupted course of his providence that our souls move themselves in their outgoings and operations, that our thoughts run to and fro about a thousand subjects, and our affections run out towards their proper objects: It is likewise by him that our souls move our bodies; we cannot

cannot stir a hand, or a foot, or a tongue, but by him, who as he is the first cause, so is the first mover. 3. In him we have our being; not only from him we had it at first, but in him we have it still; to his continued care and goodness we owe it, not only that we have a being, and are not sunk into non-entity, but that we have our being, have this being, were, and still are, of such a noble rank of beings, capable of knowing and enjoying God, and are not thrust into the meanness of brutes, or the misery of devils.

8. That upon the whole matter, we are God's offspring, he is our Father that begat us, Deut. xxxii. 6, 18. and he hath nourished and brought us up as children, Isa. i. 2. The confession of an adversary in such a case, is always looked upon to be of use as *argumentum ad hominem*, and therefore the apostle here quotes a saying of one of the Greek poets, Aratus, a native of Cilicia, Paul's countryman, in his *Phænomena*, in the beginning of his book, speaking of the heathen Jupiter, that is, in the poetical dialect, the supreme God, he saith this of him, *τὸ δὲ καὶ γένος ἔσμεν*, for we are his offspring. And he might have quoted other poets to the purpose of what he was speaking, that in God we live, and move, *Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus mens agit mollem*. So Virgil, *Æneid. vi. Est deus in nobis agitante calescimus illo*. So Ovid, *Fastor. vi. Jupiter est quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris*. So Lucan lib. ii. But he chooses this of Aratus, as having much in a little. By this it appears, not only that Paul was himself a scholar, but that human learning is both ornamental and serviceable to a gospel minister, especially for the convincing of those that are without; for it enables them to beat them at their own weapons, and to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. How can the adversaries of truth be beaten out of their strong-holds by those that do not know them? It may likewise shame God's professing people, who forget their relation to God, and walk contrary to it, that a heathen poet could say of God, *we are his offspring*, formed by him, formed for him, more the care of his providence, than ever any children were the care of their parents, and therefore are obliged to obey his commands, and acquiesce in his disposals, and to be unto him for a name and a praise, since in him, and upon him, we live, we ought to live to him; since in him we move, we ought to move towards him; and since in him we have our being, and from him we receive all the supports and comforts of our being, we ought to consecrate our being to him, and to apply ourselves to him for a new being, a better being, an eternal well-being.

Thirdly, From all these great truths concerning God he infers the absurdity of their idolatry, as the prophets of old had done. If this be so,

1. Then God cannot be represented by an image; if we are the offspring of God, as we are spirits in flesh, then certainly he who is the Father of our spirits, (and they are the principal part of us, and that part of us by which we are denominated God's offspring) is himself a spirit, and we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device, ver. 29. We wrong God, and put an affront upon him, if we think so: God honoured man in making his soul after his likeness, but man dishonours God, if he makes him after the likeness of his body: The Godhead is spiritual, infinite, immaterial, and incomprehensible, and therefore it is a very false and unjust conception which an image gives us of God, be the matter never so rich, gold, or silver, be the shape never so curious, and be it never so well graven by art and man's device, its countenance, posture or dress never so significant, it is a teacher of lies.

2. Then he dwells not in temples made with hands, ver. 24. He is not invited to any temple men can build for him, nor confined to any: A temple brings him never the nearer to us, nor keeps him ever the longer among us: A temple is convenient for us to come together in to worship God; but God needs not any place of rest or residence, or the magnificence and splendor of any structure to add to the glory of his appearance: A pious, upright heart, a temple not made with hands, but by the Spirit of God, is that which he dwells in, and delights to dwell in: See 1 Kings viii. 27. Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

3. Then he is not worshipped, *σεβασμὸς*, he is not served, or ministered unto, with mens hands, as though he needed any thing, ver. 25. He that made all, and maintains all, cannot be benefited by any of our services, nor needs them. If we receive and derive all from him, he is all-sufficient, and therefore cannot but be self-sufficient, and independent. What need can God have of our services, or what benefit can he have by them, when he has all perfection in himself, and we have nothing that is good, but what we have from him? The philosophers, indeed, were sensible of this truth, that God has no need of us or our services; but the vulgar heathen built temples, and offered sacrifices to their gods, with an opinion that they needed houses and food: See Job xxxv. 5, 6, 7, 8. Psalm l. 8, &c.

4. Then it concerns us all to enquire after God, ver. 27. That they should seek the Lord, i. e. fear and worship him in a right manner. Therefore God has kept the children of men in a dependence upon him for life, and all the comforts of life, that he might keep them under constant obligations to him: We have plain indications of God's presence among us, his presidency over us, the care of his providence concerning us, and its

bounty to us, that we might be put upon enquiring, *where is God our maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?* Job xxxv. 10, 11. Nothing, one would think, should be more powerful with us to convince us that there is a God; and to engage us to seek his honour and glory in our services, and to seek our happiness in his favour and love, than the consideration of our own nature, especially the noble powers and faculties of our own souls; If we reflect upon those, and contemplate these, we may perceive both our relation and obligation to a God above us. Yet so dark is this discovery in comparison with that by divine revelation, and so unapt are we to receive it, that they who have no other, could but *happily feel God, and find him*. 1. It was very uncertain, whether they would by this searching find out God; It is but a peradventure, if *happily* they might. 2. If they did find out something of God, yet it was but some confused notions of him; they did but *feel after* him, as men in the dark, or blind men, who lay hold on a thing that comes in their way, but know not whether it be that which they are in quest of or no. It is a very confused notion which this poet of theirs has of the relation between God and man, and very general, that *we are his offspring*; as was also that of their philosophers; Pythagoras said, *Θείον γένος ἐστὶ βεβλήσθαι*, Men have a sort of a divine nature. And Heraclitus (apud Lucian) being asked, *What men were?* answered, they were, *Θεοὶ θνητοί*, mortal gods. And, what the gods were? answered, they were *ἀθάνατοι ἀνθρώπων* immortal men. And Pindar saith, *Nem. Ode 6. Ἐν ἀνδρῶν γένει, ἔν θένον γένος*, God and man are near akin; it is true, that by the knowledge of ourselves, we may be led to the knowledge of God, but it is a very confused knowledge. This is but *feeling after him*. We have therefore reason to be thankful, that by the gospel of Christ, we have notices given us of God much clearer than we could have by the light of nature; we do not now *feel after him*, but with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of God.

Fourthly, He proceeds to call them all to repent of their idolatries; and to turn from them, ver. 30, 31. This is the practical part of Paul's sermon before the university; having declared God to them, ver. 23. from thence he properly presseth upon them *repentance towards God*; and would have taught them also *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, if they would have had patience to hear him. Having shewed them the absurdity of their worshipping other gods, he persuades them to go on no longer in that foolish way of worship, but to return from it to the living and true God. Observe,

5. The carriage of God towards the Gentile world before the gospel came among them; *the times of this ignorance God winked at*. 1. They were times of great ignorance; human learning flowed more than ever in the Gentile world just before Christ's time: but in the things of God they were grossly ignorant. Those are ignorant indeed, who either know not God; or, *worship him ignorantly*; idolatry was owing to ignorance. 2. These times of ignorance God winked at. Understand it, 1. As an act of divine justice: God despised or neglected these times of ignorance, and did not send them his gospel, as now he doth. It was very provoking to him to see his glory thus given to another; and he detested and hated these times. So some take it. Or rather, 2. As an act of divine patience and forbearance; he winked at these times; he did not restrain them from these idolatries, by sending prophets to them, as he did to Israel; he did not punish them in their idolatries, as he did Israel; but gave them the gifts of his providence, Acts xiv. 16. *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence*, Psalm l. 21. He did not give them such calls and motives to repentance, as he doth now he let them alone, because they did not improve the light they had, but were willingly ignorant, he did not send them greater lights. Or, he was not quick and severe with them, but was long suffering towards them, because they did it ignorantly, 1 Tim. i. 13.

2. The charge God gave to the Gentile world by the gospel, which he now sent among them; he now commandeth all men every where to repent; to change their mind, and change their way; to be ashamed of their folly, and to act more wisely; to break off the worship of idols, and bind themselves to the worship of the true God. Nay, it is to turn with sorrow and shame from every sin, and with cheerfulness and resolution to every duty. 1. This is God's command; it had been a great favour if he had only told us, that there was room left for repentance, and we might be admitted to it; but he goes further, he interposeth his own authority for our good, and has made that our duty which is our privilege. 2. It is his command to all men every where; to men, and not to angels, that need it not; to men, and not to devils, that are excluded the benefit of it. To all men in all places; all men have made work for repentance, and have cause enough to repent, and all men are invited to repent, and shall have the benefit of it. The apostles are commissioned to preach this every where. The prophets were sent to command the Jews to repent; but the apostles were sent to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations. 3. Now in gospel-times it is more earnestly commanded, because more encouraged than it had been formerly; now the way of remission is more opened than it had been, and the promise more fully confirmed; and therefore now he expects we should all repent. Now repent; now at length, now in time, repent; for you have too long

long gone on in sin : Now *in time* repent, for it will be too late shortly.

3. The great reason to enforce this command, taken from the judgment to come ; God commands us to repent, *because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness*, ver. 31. and has now under the gospel made a clearer discovery of a state of retribution in the other world, than ever before. Observe,

1. The God that *made* the world, will *judge* it ; that gave the children of men their being and faculties, will call them to an account what use they have made of them, and recompense them accordingly. Whether the body served the soul in serving God ; or the soul was a drudge to the body in making provision for the flesh ? and *every man shall receive according to the things done in the body*, 1 Cor. v. 10. The God that now *governs* the world, will *judge* it, will reward the faithful friends of his government, and punish the rebels.

2. There is *a day appointed* for this general review of all that men have done in time, and a final determination of their state for eternity. The day is *fixed* in the counsel of God, and cannot be *altered* ; but it is *hid* there, and cannot be known. A *day of decision* a *day of recompence* ; a day that will put a final period to all the days of time,

3. The world will be judged *in righteousness* ; for God is not *unrighteous*, who *taketh vengeance*, far be it from him that he should do *iniquity*. His knowledge of all mens characters and actions is infallibly true, and therefore his sentence upon them uncontestably just : And as there will be no appeal from it, so there will be no exception against it.

4. God will judge the world *by that man whom he hath ordained*, who can be no other but the Lord Jesus, to whom *all judgment is committed*. By him God *made* the world, by him he redeemed it, by him he *governs* it, and by him he will *judge* it.

5. God's raising Christ from the dead is the great proof of his being appointed and ordained the Judge of quick and dead : His doing him that honour, evidenced his designing him this honour. His raising him from the dead, was the beginning of his exaltation, his judging the world will be the perfection of it ; and he that begins will make an end. God hath *given assurance unto all men*, sufficient ground for their faith to build upon, both that there is a judgment to come, and that Christ will be their Judge ; the matter is not left doubtful, but is of unquestionable certainty. Let all his enemies be assured of it, and tremble before him ; let all his friends be assured of it, and triumph in him.

6. The consideration of the *judgment to come*, and of the great hand Christ will have in that judgment, should engage us all to repent of our sins, and turn from them to God : This is the only way to make the Judge our friend in that day, which will be a terrible day to all that live and die impenitent, but true penitents will then *lift up their hands with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh*.

32. ¶ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked : and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. 33. So Paul departed from among them. 34. Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed : among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

We have here a short account of the issue of Paul's preaching at Athens.

First, Few were the better ; the gospel had as little success at Athens as any where ; for the pride of the philosophers there, as of the Pharisees at Jerusalem, prejudiced them against the gospel of Christ.

1. Some ridiculed Paul and his preaching ; they heard him patiently, till he came to speak of the *resurrection of the dead*, ver. 32. and then some of them began to *hiss* him, they *mocked* ; what he had said before was somewhat like what they had sometimes heard in their own schools ; and some notion they had of a resurrection, as it signifies a *future state* ; but if he speak of a *resurrection of the dead*, though it be of the resurrection of Christ himself, it is altogether incredible to them, and they cannot bear so much as to hear of it, as being contrary to a principle of their philosophy : *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*. They had deified their heroes after their death ; but they never thought of their being raised from the dead, and therefore they could by no means reconcile themselves to this doctrine of Christ's being *raised from the dead* ; how can this be ? This great doctrine which is the *saints joy*, is *their jest* ; when it was but mentioned to them, they *mocked*, and made a laughing matter of it. We are not to think it strange, if sacred truths of the greatest certainty and importance, are made the scorn of profane wits.

2. Others were willing to take time to consider of it ; they said, *We will hear thee again of this matter*. They would not at present comply with what Paul said, or oppose it ; but *we will hear thee again of this matter* of the *resurrection from the dead*. It should seem they overlooked that which was plain and uncontroverted, and

shifted off the application and the improvement of that, by starting objections against that which was disputable, and would admit a debate. Thus many lose the benefit of the practical doctrine of Christianity, by wading beyond their depth into controversy ; or rather, by objecting against that which hath some difficulty in it ; whereas, if any man were disposed and determined to *do the will of God*, as far as it is discovered to him, he should *know of the doctrine of Christ*, that it is *of God, and not of man*, John vii. 17. Those that would not yield to the present convictions of the word, thought to get clear of them, as Felix did, by putting them off to another opportunity ; they will hear of it again some time or other, but they know not when ; and thus the devil cozens them of *all their time*, by cozening them of the *present time*.

3. Paul thereupon left them for the present to consider of it ver. 33. He departed from among them, as seeing little likelihood of doing any good with them at this time ; but it is likely, with a promise to those that were willing to hear him again, that he would meet them when ever they pleased.

Secondly, Yet there were some that were wrought upon, ver. 34. If some would not, others would.

1. There were *certain men that clave to him, and believed* ; when he departed from among them, they would not part with him so ; wherever he went, they would follow him, with a resolution to adhere to the doctrine he preached, which they believed.

2. Two are particularly named ; one was an eminent man ; Dionysius the Areopagite ; one of that high court, or great council that sat in Areopagus, or Mars-hill ; a judge, a senator, one of those before whom Paul was summoned to appear ; his judge becomes his convert. The account which the ancients give of this Dionysius is, that he was bred at Athens, had studied astrology in Egypt, where he took notice of the miraculous eclipse at our Saviour's passion, that returning to Athens he became a senator ; disputed with Paul and was by him converted from his error and idolatry ; and being by him thoroughly instructed was made the first bishop of Athens. So Eusebius, *lib. v. chap. iv. lib. iv. chap. 22*. The woman named Damaris was (as some think) the wife of Dionysius ; but rather, some other person of quality ; and though there, was not so great a harvest gathered in at Athens, as there was at some other places, yet these few being wrought upon there, Paul had no reason to say, he had *laboured in vain*.

C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Paul's coming to Corinth, his private converse with Aquila and Priscilla, and his publick reasonings with the Jews from whom, when they rejected him, he turned to the Gentiles, ver. 1,—6. (2.) The great success of his ministry there, and the encouragement Christ gave him in a vision, to continue his labours there, in hopes of further success, ver. 7,—11. (3.) The molestations which after some time he met with there from the Jews, which he got pretty well through by the coldness of Gallio the Roman governour in the cause, ver. 12,—17. (4.) The progress Paul made through many countries, after he had continued long at Corinth, for the edifying and watering of the churches which he had founded and planted, in which circuit he made a short visit to Jerusalem, ver. 18,—23. (5.) An account of Apollos's improvement in knowledge, and his usefulness in the church, ver. 24,—28.

1. A Fter these things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth ; 2. And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome) and came unto them. 3. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought (for by their occupation they were tent-makers.) 4. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and perswaded the Jews, and the Greeks. 5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ. 6. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads ; I am clean : from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

We do not find that Paul was much persecuted at Athens, nor that he was driven from thence by any ill usage, as he was from those places where the Jews had or could make any interest ; but his reception at Athens being cold, and little prospect of doing good there he departed from Athens, leaving the care of those there who believed, with Dionysius ; and from thence he came to Corinth, where he was now instrumental in planting a church that became upon many accounts considerable. Corinth was the chief city of Achaia, now a province of the empire, a rich and splendid city, *Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum* ; the country thereabouts at this day called the Morea. Now here we have,

First, Paul working for his living, ver. 2, 3.

1. Though

1. Though he was bred a scholar, yet he was master of a *handicraft trade*. He was a *tent-maker*, an upholsterer; he made tents for the use of soldiers and shepherds, of cloth or stuff or (as some say, tents were then generally made) of leather, or skins, as the outer covering of the tabernacle. Hence to live in tents was to live *sub pellibus*. Dr. Lightfoot shews, that it was the custom of the Jews to bring up their children to some trade, yea, though they gave them learning or estates. Rabbi Judah saith, *he that teacheth not his son a trade, is as if he taught him to be a thief*. And another saith, *he that hath a trade in his hand, is as a vineyard that is fenced*. An honest trade by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt; Paul, though a Pharisee and bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, yet having in his youth learned to *make tents* he did not by disuse lose the art.

2. Though he was entitled to a maintenance from the churches he had planted, and from the people he preached to, yet he worked at his calling to get bread; which is more to his praise who did not ask for supplies, than to theirs who did not supply him unasked, knowing what straits he was reduced to. See how humble Paul was, and wonder that so great a man could stoop so low, but he had learned condescension of his Master, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. See how industrious he was, and how willing to *take pains*: He that had so much more excellent work to do *with his mind*, yet when there was occasion, did not think it below him to work *with his hands*. Even those that are *redeemed from the curse of the law*, yet are not exempt from that sentence, *in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*. See how careful Paul was to recommend his ministry, and to prevent prejudices against it, even the most unjust and unreasonable; he therefore maintained himself with his own labour, that he might not make the gospel of Christ burthensome, 2 Cor. xi. 7, &c. 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9.

3. Though we may suppose he was master of his trade, yet he did not disdain to work, *journey-work* he wrought with Aquila and Priscilla, who were of that calling; so that he got no more but day wages; a bare subsistence. Poor tradesmen must be thankful if their callings bring them in a maintenance for themselves and their families, though they cannot do as the rich merchants that raise estates by their callings.

4. Though he was himself a great apostle, yet he chose to work with Aquila and Priscilla, because he found them to be very intelligent in the things of God, as appears afterwards, ver. 26. and he owns that they had been *his helpers in Christ Jesus*, Rom. xvi. 3. This is an example to those who are going to service to seek for those services in which they may have the best help for their souls. Chuse to work with those that are likely to be *helpers in Christ Jesus*. It is good to be in company, and to have conversation with those that will further us in the knowledge of Christ, and to put ourselves under the influence of such as are resolved, that they *will serve the Lord*.

Concerning this Aquila we are here told, 1. That he was a Jew, but born in Pontus, ver. 2. Many of the *Jews of the dispersion* were seated in that country, as appears, 1 Pet. i. 1. 2. That he was lately come from Italy to Corinth; it seems he often changed his habitation; this is not the world we can promise ourselves a settlement in. 3. That the reason of his leaving Italy was, because by a late edict of the emperor Claudius Cesar all Jews were banished from Rome; for the Jews were generally disgusted, and every occasion was taken to put hardship and disgrace upon them; God's heritage was a *speckled bird*, the birds round about were against her, Jer. xii. 9. Aquila though a Christian, was banished because he had been a Jew; and the Gentiles had such confused notions of the thing that they could not distinguish between a Jew and a Christian. Suetonius in the life of Claudius, speaks of this decree in the ninth year of his reign, and saith, the reason was, because the Jews were a turbulent people, *assiduo tumultuantes*; and that it was *impulso Christo*, upon the account of Christ; some zealous *for him*, others bitter *against him*, which occasioned great heats, such as gave umbrage to the government, and provoked the emperor, who was a timorous, jealous man, to order them all to be gone. If Jews persecute Christians, it is not strange, if heathens persecute them both.

Secondly, We have here Paul preaching to the Jews, and dealing with them to bring them to the faith of Christ; both the native *Jews and the Greeks*, i. e. Those that were more or less profelyted to the Jewish religion, and frequented their meetings.

1. He *reasoned with them in the synagogue* publicly every sabbath; see in what way the apostles propagated the gospel, not by force and violence, by fire and sword, not by demanding an implicit consent; but by fair arguing, they drew *with cords of a man*; gave a reason for what they said, and gave a liberty to object against it, having satisfactory answers ready. God invites us to *come and reason with him*, Isa. i. 8. and challenges sinners to *produce their cause*, and bring forth their *strong reasons*, Isa. xlii. 21. Paul was a rational as well as scriptural preacher.

2. He *persuaded them*, *ἐπειθε*, it notes, 1. The urgency of his preaching; he did not only dispute argumentatively with them, but he followed his arguments with affectionate persuasions, begging of them for God's sake, for their own souls sake, for their childrens sake, not to refuse the offer of salvation made them. Or,

2. The *good effect* of his preaching; he persuaded them i. e. he prevailed with them; so some understand it. *In sententiam suam adducebat*. Some of them were convinced by his reasonings, and yielded to Christ.

3. He was yet more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers, his seconds, came up with him, ver. 5. *When Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia*, and had brought him good tidings from the churches there, and were ready to assist him here, and strengthened his hands, than Paul was more than before *pressed in spirit*, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching. He was grieved for the obstinacy and infidelity of his countrymen the Jews, was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the *love of Christ constrained him* to it, 2 Cor. v. 14. it is the word that is used here, it *pressed him in spirit* to it. And being thus pressed, he *testified to the Jews* with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured of himself, and attested to them as a *faithful saying*, and *worthy of all acceptation*, that *Jesus is the Christ*, the Messiah promised to the fathers, and expected by them.

Thirdly, We have him here abandoning the unbelieving Jews, and turning from them to the Gentiles, as he had done in other places, ver. 6.

1. Many of the Jews, and indeed the most of them persisted in their contradiction to the gospel of Christ, and would not yield to the strongest reasonings, or the most winning persuasions, they *opposed themselves* and *blasphemed*; they *set themselves in battle array* (so the word signifies) against the gospel, they joined hand in hand to stop the progress of it. They resolved they would not believe it themselves, and would do all they could to keep others from believing it. They could not argue against it, but what was wanting in reason they made up in ill language; they *blasphemed*, spoke reproachfully of Christ, and in him of God himself, as Rev. xiii. 5, 6. To justify their infidelity they broke out into downright blasphemy.

2. Paul hereupon declared himself discharged from them, and left them to perish in their unbelief. He that was *pressed in spirit* to *testify to them*, ver. 5. when they opposed that testimony, and persisted in their opposition was *pressed in spirit* to testify against them, ver. 6. and his zeal herein also he shewed by a sign, he *shook his raiment*, shaking off the dust of it, as before they *shook off the dust of their feet*, chap. xiii. 51. for a testimony against them; thus he cleared himself from them, but threatened the judgments of God against them, as Pilate by washing his hands signified the devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood from himself upon the Jews, so Paul by *shaking his raiment* signified what he said (if possible) to affect them with it. 1. He had done his part, and was *clean* from the blood of their souls; he had like a faithful watchman given them warning, and thereby had *delivered his soul*, though he could not prevail to deliver theirs; he had tried all methods to work upon them, but all in vain, so that if they perish in their unbelief, their blood is not to be required at his hands; here, and chap. xx. 26. he plainly refers to Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9. It is very comfortable to a minister to have the testimony of his conscience for him, that he has faithfully discharged his trust by warning sinners. 2. They would certainly perish if they persisted in their unbelief, and the blame would lie *wholly* upon themselves, *your blood be upon your own heads*, you will be your own destroyers, your nation will be ruined in this world, and particular persons will be ruined in the other world, and *you alone shall bear it*. If any thing would frighten them at last into a compliance with the gospel, sure this would.

3. Having *given them over*, yet he doth not *give over* his work, though Israel be not gathered, Christ and his gospel shall be glorious, *from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles*; and the Jews cannot complain, for they had the first offer, and a fair one, made to them. The guests that were first invited will not come, and the provision must not be lost, guests must be had therefore *from the high-ways, and the hedges*. *We would have gathered the Jews*, Mat. xxiii. 37. *would have healed them*, Jer. li. 9. and they *would not*, but Christ must not be a head without a body, nor a foundation without a building, and therefore if they *will not*, we must try whether *others will*. Thus the *fall and diminishing of the Jews* was the riches of the Gentiles; and Paul said this to their faces, not only because it was what he could justify, but to *provoke them to jealousy*, Rom. xi. 12, 14.

7. ¶ And he departed thence, and entred into a certain mans house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joyned hard to the synagogue. 8. And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized. 9. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Here we are told,

First, That Paul changed his quarters ; Christ directed his disciples when he sent them forth, not to *go from house to house*, Luke x. 7. but there might be occasion to do it, as Paul did here. He departed out of the synagogue, being driven out by the perverseness of the unbelieving Jews, and he *entered into a certain man's house* named Justus, ver. 7. It should seem, he went to this man's house, not to lodge, for he continued with Aquila and Priscilla, but to preach ; when the Jews would not let him go on peaceably with his work in their meeting, this honest man opened his doors to him, and told him, he should be welcome to preach there, and Paul accepted the motion ; and it was not the first time that God's ark had taken up its lodging in a private house. When Paul could not have liberty to preach in the synagogue, he preached in a house without any disparagement to his doctrine. But observe the account of this man and his house.

1. The man was next door to a Jew ; he was one that *worshipped God*, he was not an idolater, though he was a Gentile, but was a *worshipper* of the God of Israel, and him only, as Cornelius ; that Paul might give the less offence to the Jews, though he had abandoned them he set up his meeting in that man's house. Even then when he was under a necessity of breaking off from them to turn to the Gentiles, yet he would study to oblige them.

2. The house was next door to the synagogue, it joined close to it ; which some, perhaps, might interpret as done *with design* to draw people from the synagogue to the meeting, but I rather think it was done in *charity*, to shew that he would come as near them as he could, and was ready to return to them if they were but willing to receive his message, and would not contradict and blaspheme as they had done.

Secondly, That Paul saw the good *fruit of his labours* presently, both among Jews and Gentiles.

1. Crispus a Jew, an eminent one, the *chief ruler of the synagogue*, believed on the Lord Jesus with all his house, ver. 8. It was for the honour of the gospel, that there were some rulers and persons of the first rank both in church and state that embraced it. This would leave the Jews inexcusable, that the ruler of their synagogue, who may be supposed to have excelled the rest in knowledge of the scriptures, and zeal for their religion, believed the gospel, and yet they opposed and blasphemed it. Not only he, but his house believed, and, probably, were baptized with him by Paul, 1 Cor. i. 14.

2. Many of the Corinthians who were Gentiles, (and some of them persons of an ill character, as appears, 1 Cor. vi. 11. *such were some of you*) hearing, believed and were baptized : First, they heard, for *faith comes by hearing*, some, perhaps, came to hear Paul under some convictions of conscience, that the way they were in was not right ; but, it is probable, the most came only for curiosity, because it was a new doctrine that was preached ; but hearing they believed, by the power of God working upon them ; and believing they were baptized, and so fixed for Christ, took upon them the profession of Christianity, and became entitled to the privileges of Christians.

Thirdly, That Paul was encouraged by a vision to go on with his work at Corinth, ver. 9. *The Lord Jesus spoke to Paul in the night by a vision* ; when he was musing on his work, communing with his own heart upon his bed, and considering, whether he should continue here or no ; what method he should take here, and what probability there was of doing good, then Christ appeared very seasonably to him, and in the multitude of his thoughts within him, delighted his soul with divine consolations.

1. He renewed his commission and charge to preach the gospel ; *be not afraid of the Jews* ; though they are very outrageous, and, perhaps, the more enraged by the conversion of the chief ruler of their synagogue ; be not afraid of the magistrates of the city, for they have *no power against thee but what is given them from above*. It is the cause of heaven thou art pleading, do it boldly. *Be not afraid of their words, nor dismayed at their looks* ; but *speak, and hold not thy peace* ; let slip no opportunity of speaking to them, cry aloud, spare not ; do not hold thy peace from speaking for fear of them, nor hold thy peace in speaking (if I may so say) do not speak shily and with caution, but plainly, and fully, and with courage ; speak out, use all the liberty of spirit that becomes an ambassador for Christ.

2. He assured him of his presence with him, which was sufficient to animate him, and put life and spirit into him ; *be not afraid, for I am with thee*, to protect thee, and bear thee out, and to deliver thee from all thy fears, *speak, and hold not thy peace* ; for *I am with thee*, to own what thou sayest, to work with thee, and to confirm the word by signs following. The same promise that ratified the general commission, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. *Low I am with you always*, is here repeated. They that have Christ with them, need not to fear, and ought not to shrink.

3. He gave him a warrant of protection to save him harmless ; *no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee* ; thou shalt be delivered out of the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, and shalt not be driven hence as thou wast from other places by persecution. He doth not promise, that *no man should set on him* ; for the next news we hear, is, that he is set upon and brought to the judgment-seat, ver. 12. but *no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee*, the remainder of their wrath

shall be restrained ; thou shalt not be beaten and imprisoned here as thou wast at Philippi. Paul met with coarser treatment at first than he did afterwards, and was now comforted, according to the time wherein he had been afflicted. Trials shall not last always ; Psal. lxxvi. 10, 11, 12. Or, we may take it more generally. *No man shall set on thee, τὴ κακῶσαι σε*, to do evil to thee ; whatever trouble they may give thee, there is no evil in it. They may kill thee, but they cannot hurt thee ; for *I am with thee*, Psal. xxiii. 4. Isa. xli. 10.

4. He gave him a prospect of success ; *for I have much people in this city* ; therefore no man shall prevail to obstruct thy work, therefore I will be with thee, to own thy work, and therefore do thou go on vigorously and cheerfully in it ; for there are many in this city, that are to be effectually called by thy ministry, in whom thou shalt see of the travel of thy soul. *καὶ ἐστὶ μοι πολὺς*, There is to me a great people here ; the Lord knows them that are his, yea, and them that shall be his ; for it is by his work upon them that they become his, and known unto him are all his works. *I have them*, though they yet know me not ; though yet they are let captive by Satan at his will : for the Father has given them me, to be a seed to serve me ; *I have them* written in the book of life, I have their names down, and of all that were given me I will lose none ; *I have them*, for I am sure to have them ; *whom he did predestinate, them he called*. In this city, though it be a very profane wicked city, full of impurity, and the more so for a temple of Venus there, to which there was great resort, yet in this heap, that seems to be all chaff, there is wheat, in this ore, that seems to be all dross, there is gold. Let us not despair concerning any place, when even in Corinth, Christ had much people.

Fourthly, That upon this encouragement he made a long stay there, ver. 11. He continued at Corinth, a year and six months, not to make his ease but to follow his work, teaching the word of God among them ; and it being a city flocked to from all parts, he had opportunity there of preaching the gospel to strangers, and sending notice of it thence to other countries. He stayed so long,

1. For the bringing in of those that were without ; Christ had much people there, and by the power of his grace he could have had them all converted in one month or week, as at the first preaching of the gospel, when thousands were inclosed at one cast of the net ; but God works variously. The people Christ has at Corinth must be called in by degrees, some by one sermon, others by another, *we see not yet all things put under Christ*. Let Christ's ministers go on in their duty, though their work be not done all at once ; nay, though it be done but a little at a time.

2. For the building up of those that were within ; those that are converted have still need to be taught the word of God ; and particular need at Corinth to be taught it by Paul himself, for no sooner was the good seed sown in that field, but the enemy came and sowed tares, the false apostles, these deceitful workers, whom Paul in his epistles to the Corinthians complains so much of. When the hands of Jewish persecutors were tied, who were professed enemies to the gospel, Paul had a more vexatious trouble created him, and the church more mischievous damage done it by the tongue of Judaizing preachers, who under colour of the Christian name, undermined the very foundations of Christianity. Soon after Paul came to Corinth, it is supposed he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians, which in order of time was the first of all the epistles he wrote by divine inspiration ; and the second epistle to the same church was written not long after. Ministers may be serving Christ, and promoting the great ends of their ministry, by writing good letters, as well as by preaching good sermons.

12. ¶ And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat, 13. Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you : 15. But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it ; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16. And he drave them from the judgment-seat. 17. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat : and Gallio cared for none of those things.

We have here an account of some disturbance given to Paul and his friends at Corinth, but no great harm done, nor much hindrance given to the work of Christ there.

First, Paul is accused by the Jews before the Roman governor, ver. 12, 13. The governor was Gallio, deputy of Achaia, i. e. proconsul, for Achaia was a consular province of the empire. This Gallio was elder brother to the famous Seneca ; in his youth he was called Novatus, but took the name of Gallio upon his being adopted into the family of Julius Gallio ; he is described by Seneca his brother, to be a man of great ingenuity, and great probity, and a man

a man of a wonderful good temper ; he was called *Dulcis Gallio*, for his sweet disposition ; and is said to have been universally beloved. Now observe,

1. How rudely Paul is apprehended and brought before Gallio : *The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul*. They were the ringleaders of all the mischief against Paul, and they entered into a confederacy to do him a mischief ; they were unanimous in it, they came upon him *with one accord, hand joined in hand* to do this wickedness ; they did it with violence and fury, *they made an insurrection* to the disturbance of the publick peace, and hurried Paul away *to the judgment-seat*, and, for ought appears, allowed him no time to prepare for his trial.

2. How falsely Paul is accused before Gallio, *ver. 13. This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law*. They could not charge him with persuading men *not to worship God* at all, or *to worship other gods* (Deut. xiii. 2.) but only *to worship God in a way contrary to the law*. The Romans allowed the Jews in their provinces the observation of their own law ; and what then ? must they therefore be persecuted as criminals, who worship God in any other way ? doth their toleration include a power of imposition ? But the charge was unjust ; for their own law had in it a promise of a *prophet whom God would raise up to them, and him they should hear* : Now Paul persuaded them to believe in *this prophet*, who was come, and *to hear him*, which was according to the law, for he came *not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*. The law relating to the temple service, those Jews at Corinth could not observe, because of their distance from Jerusalem, and there was no part of their synagogue worship which Paul contradicted. Thus when people are *taught to worship God in Christ, and to worship him in the Spirit*, they are ready to quarrel, as if *they were taught to worship him contrary to the law* ; whereas this is indeed perfective of the law.

Secondly, Gallio, upon the first hearing, or rather, without any hearing at all, dismisseth the cause, and will not take any cognizance of it, *ver. 14, 15*. Paul was going about to make his defence, and to shew that he did *not teach men to worship God contrary to the law* ; but the judge being resolved not to pass any sentence upon this cause, he would not give himself the trouble of examining it. Observe,

1. He shews himself very ready to do the part of a judge in any matter that it was proper for him to take cognizance of : He said to the Jews, that were the persecutors, *If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, if you could charge the prisoner with theft, or fraud, with murder, or rapine, or any act of immorality, I should think myself bound to bear with you* in your complaints, though they were clamorous and noisy ; for the rudeness of the petitioners was no good reason, if their cause was just, why they should not have justice done them ; it is the duty of magistrates to right the injured, and to animadvert upon the injurious ; and if the complaint be not made with all the decorum that might be, yet they should hear it out : But,

2. He will by no means allow them to make a complaint to him of a thing that was not within his jurisdiction, *ver. 15. If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it ; end it among yourselves as you can ; but I will be no judge of such matters* ; you shall neither burthen my patience with the hearing of it, nor burthen my conscience with giving judgment upon it ; and therefore, when they were urgent and pressing to be heard, *he drove them from the judgment-seat*, *ver. 16.* and ordered another cause to be called.

Now, (1.) Here was something well in Gallio's conduct, and praise-worthy, that he would not pretend to judge of things he did not understand ; that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their own religion, but yet would not let them, under pretence of that, run down Paul, and abuse him ; or, at least, would not himself be the tool of their malice, to give judgment against him ; he looked upon the matter to be not within his jurisdiction, and therefore would not meddle in it.

But, (2.) It was certainly ill to speak so slightly of a law and religion, which he might have known to be of God, and which he ought to have acquainted himself with. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, whether the gospel be a divine revelation, were not *questions of words and names*, as he scornfully and profanely called them ; they are questions of vast importance, and which, if he had understood himself aright, he would have seen himself nearly concerned in : He speaks as if he boasted of his ignorance of the scriptures, and took a pride in it, as if it were below him to take notice of the law of God, or make any enquiries concerning it.

Thirdly, The abuse done to Sosthenes, and Gallio's unconcernedness in it, *ver. 17.*

1. The parties put a great contempt upon the court, when they took Sosthenes and beat him before the judgment-seat. Many conjectures there are concerning this matter, because it is uncertain who this Sosthenes was, and who the Greeks were that abused him : It seems most probable, that Sosthenes was a Christian, and Paul's particular friend, that appeared for him on this occasion, and, probably, had taken care of his safety, and conveyed him away, when Gallio dismissed the cause ; so that, when they could not light on Paul, they fell foul on him who protected him. It is

certain, there was one Sosthenes that was a friend of Paul, and well known at Corinth, it is likely, he was a minister, for Paul calls him his brother, and joins him with himself in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 1. as he doth Timothy in his second, and, it is probable, this was he ; he is said to be a ruler of the synagogue, either joint-ruler with Crispus, *ver. 8.* or ruler of one synagogue, as Crispus was of another : And as for the Greeks that abused him, it is very probable, they were either Hellenist Jews, or Jewish Greeks, those that joined with the Jews in opposing the gospel, *ver. 4, 6.* and the native Jews put them on to do it, thinking it would in them be less offensive : They were so enraged against Paul, that they beat Sosthenes ; and so enraged against Gallio, because he would not countenance the persecution, that they beat him before the judgment-seat, whereby they did, in effect, tell him, that they cared not for him ; if he would not be their executioner, they would be their own judges.

2. The court put no less a contempt upon the cause, and the persons too ; but Gallio cared for none of these things : If by this he meant that he cared not for the affronts of ill men, it was commendable, while he steadily adhered to the laws and rules of equity, he might despise their contempts ; but if it be meant, as I think it is, that he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, it carries his indifferency too far, and gives us but an ill character of him : Here is wickedness done in the place of judgment, which Solomon complains of, *Eccl. iii. 16.* and nothing done to discountenance and suppress it : Gallio, as a judge, ought to have protected Sosthenes, and restrained and punished the Greeks that assaulted him ; for a man to be mobbed in the street, or in the market, perhaps, may not be easily helped, but to be so in his court, the judgment-seat, the court sitting, and not concerned at it, is an evidence that truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter ; for he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey, *Isa. lix. 14.* Those that see and hear of the sufferings of God's people, and have no sympathy with them, or concern for them, do not pity and pray for them, it is all one to them whether the interests of religion sink or swim, are of the spirit of Gallio here, who, when a good man was abused before his face, cared for none of these things ; like them that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, *Amos vi. 6.* like the king and Haman, that sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed, *Ester iii. 15.*

18. ¶ And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila : having shorn his head in Cenchrea : for he had a vow. 19. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there : but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. 20. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not : 21. But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem : but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. 22. And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

We have here Paul in motion, as we have had him at Corinth for some time at rest, but in both busy, very busy, in the service of Christ ; if he sat still, if he went about, still it was to do good. Here is,

First, Paul's departure from Corinth, *ver. 18.*

1. He did not go away till some time after the trouble he met with there ; from other places he had departed when the storm rose, but not from Corinth, because there it was no sooner risen, but it fell again. Some tell us, that Gallio did privately countenance Paul, and took him into his favour, and that this occasioned a correspondence between Paul and Seneca, Gallio's brother, which some of the ancients speak of. After this he tarried there yet a good while, some think, beyond the year and half, mentioned *ver. 11.* while he found he laboured not in vain, he continued labouring.

2. When he went he took leave of the brethren, solemnly, and with much affection, with suitable comforts and counsels, and prayers at parting, commending what was good, reproving what was otherwise, and giving them necessary cautions against the wiles of the false apostles ; and his farewell sermon would leave impressions upon them.

3. He took with him Priscilla and Aquila, because they had a mind to accompany him ; for they seem disposed to remove, and not inclined to stay long at a place ; a disposition which may come from a good principle, and have good effects, and therefore ought not to be condemned in others, though it ought to be suspected in ourselves : There was a mighty friendship contracted between them

them and Paul, and therefore when he went, they begged to go along with him.

4. At Cenchrea, which was hard by Corinth, the port where those that went to sea from Corinth took ship, either Paul or Aquila (for the original doth not determine which) had his head shaved, to discharge himself from the vow of a Nazarite: *Having shorn his head at Cenchrea: for he had a vow.* Those that lived in Judea were, in such a case, bound to do it at the temples, but those who lived in other countries might do it in other places: The Nazarite's head was to be shaved, when either his consecration was accidentally polluted, in which case he must begin again, or *when the days of his separation were fulfilled*, Numb. vi. 9, 13, 18. which, we suppose, was the case here. Some throw it upon Aquila, who was a Jew, ver. 2. and retained, perhaps, more of his Judaism than was convenient; but I see no harm in admitting it concerning Paul, for concerning him we must admit the same thing, chap. xxi. 24, 26. not only in compliance for a time with the Jews, to whom he *became as a Jew*, 1 Cor. ix. 20. *that he might win upon them*, but because *the vow of the Nazarites, though ceremonial*, and, as such, ready to *vanish away*, yet had a great deal of moral and very pious significancy, and therefore was fit to die the last of all the Jewish ceremonies: *The Nazarites* are joined *with the prophets*, Amos ii. 11. and were very much *the glory of Israel*, Lam. iv. 7. and therefore it is not strange if Paul bound himself for some time *with the vow of a Nazarite from wine and strong drink*, and from being trimmed, to recommend himself to the Jews; and from this he now discharged himself.

Secondly, Paul's calling at Ephesus, which was the metropolis of the lesser Asia, and a sea-port.

1. *There he left Aquila and Priscilla*; not only because they would be but burthenome to him in his journey, but because they might be serviceable to the interests of the gospel at Ephesus: Paul intended shortly to settle there for some time, and *he left Aquila and Priscilla there* in the mean time, for the same end as Christ sent his disciples before to every place where he himself would come, to prepare his way: Aquila and Priscilla might, by private conversation, being very intelligent, judicious Christians, dispose the minds of many to give Paul, when he should come among them, a favourable reception, and to understand his preaching; therefore he calls them his *helpers in Christ Jesus*, Rom. xvi. 3.

2. *There he preached to the Jews in their synagogue*; though he did but call there in his journey, yet he would not go without giving them a sermon; *he entered into the synagogue*, not as a hearer, but as a preacher, for *there he reasoned with the Jews*: Though he had abandoned the Jews at Corinth, who opposed themselves, and blasphemed, yet he did not, for their sakes, decline the synagogues of the Jews in other places, but still made the first offer of the gospel to them. We must not condemn a whole body, or denomination of men, for the sake of some that carry themselves ill.

3. *The Jews at Ephesus* were so far from driving Paul away, that they courted his stay with them, ver. 20. *They desired him to tarry longer with them*, to instruct them in the gospel of Christ: *These were more noble*, and better bred, *than those Jews at Corinth*, and other places; and it was a sign that God had not quite cast away his people, but had a remnant among them.

4. Paul would not stay with them now; *he consented not*; but *bade them farewell*; he had further to go; he *must by all means keep this feast at Jerusalem*; not that he thought himself bound in duty to it, he knew the laws of the feasts were no longer binding, but he had business at Jerusalem (whatever it was) which would be best done at the time of the feast, when there was a general rendezvous of all the Jews from all parts; which of the feasts it was we are not told, probably, it was the passover, which was the most eminent.

5. He intimated his purpose, after this journey, to come and spend some time at Ephesus, by their kind invitation, being encouraged to hope that he should do good among them; it is good to have opportunities in reserve, when one good work is over, to have another to apply ourselves to; *I will return again to you*, but he inserts that necessary proviso, *if God will*: Our times are in God's hands, we purpose, but he disposeth; and therefore we must make all our promises with submission to the will of God: *If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. I will return again to you, if the Spirit suffer me*, chap. xvi. 7. that was included in Paul's case; not only if providence permit, but if God do not otherwise direct my motions.

Thirdly, Paul's visit to Jerusalem, a short visit it was, but it served as a token of respect to that truly mother church.

1. He came by sea to that port that lay next at Jerusalem; *he sailed from Ephesus*, ver. 21. *and landed at Cesarea*, ver. 22. he chose to go by sea for expedition, and for safety, and that he might see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep: Joppa had been the port for Jerusalem, but Herod having improved Cesarea, and the port at Joppa being dangerous, that was generally made use of.

2. He went up and saluted the church; by which, I think, is plainly meant the church at Jerusalem, which is emphatically called, *the church*, because there the Christian church began, Acts xv. 4. Paul thought it requisite to shew himself among them, that

they might not think his success among the Gentiles had made him think himself either above them, or estranged from them; or, that the honour God had put upon him, made him unmindful of the honour he owed to them. His going to salute the church at Jerusalem, intimates, 1. That it was a very friendly visit that he made them, in pure kindness, to enquire into their state, and to testify his hearty good will to them. Note, The increase of our new friends, should not make us to forget our old ones, but it should be a pleasure to good men, and good ministers, to revive former acquaintance. The ministers at Jerusalem were constant residents, Paul was a constant itinerant; but he took care to keep up a good correspondence with them, that they might rejoice with him in his going out, and he might rejoice with them in their tents, and they might both congratulate and wish well to one another's comfort and success. 2. That it was but a short visit; he went up and saluted them, perhaps, with the holy kiss, and made no stay among them: It was designed but for a transient interview, and yet Paul undertook this long journey for that. This is not the world we are to be together in, God's people are the salt of the earth, dispersed and scattered, yet it is good to see one another sometimes, if it be but to see one another, that we may confirm mutual love, may the better keep up our spiritual communion with one another at a distance, and may long the more for that heavenly Jerusalem, in which we hope to be together for ever.

Fourthly, His return through those countries where he had formerly preached the gospel.

1. *He went and spent some time in Antioch*, among his old friends there, from whence he was first sent out to preach among the Gentiles, chap. xiii. 1. *He went down to Antioch*, to refresh himself with the sight and conversation of the ministers there; and a very good refreshment it is to a faithful minister, to have for a while the society of his brethren; for *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance of his friend*. Paul's coming to Antioch, would bring to remembrance the former days, which would furnish him with matter for fresh thanksgiving.

2. *Thence he went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order*, where he had preached the gospel, and planted churches; which, though very briefly mentioned, chap. xvi. 6. yet was a glorious work, as appears by Gal. iv. 14, 15. where Paul speaks of his preaching of the gospel to the Galatians at the first, and their receiving him as an angel of God. These country churches (for so they were, Gal. i. 2. and we read not of any city in Galatia where a church was) Paul visited in order as they lay, watering what he had been instrumental to plant, and strengthening all the disciples: His very coming among them, and owning them, was a great strengthening to them, and their ministers; Paul's countenancing of them was encouraging them; but that was not all; he preached that to them which strengthened them, which confirmed their faith in Christ, and their resolutions for Christ, and their pious affections to him. Disciples need to be strengthened, for they are compassed about with infirmity; ministers must do what they can to strengthen them, to strengthen them all, by directing them to Christ, and bringing them to live upon him, whose strength is perfected in their weakness, and who is himself their strength and song.

24. ¶ And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace. 28. For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures, that Jesus was Christ.

The sacred history leaves Paul upon his travels, and goes here to meet Apollos at Ephesus; and to give us some account of him, which was necessary to our understanding some passages in Paul's epistles.

First, Here is an account of his character, when he came to Ephesus.

1. He was a Jew, born at Alexandria in Egypt, but of Jewish parents; for there were abundance of Jews in that city, since the dispersion of the people, as it was foretold, Deut. xxviii. 68. *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again*. His name was not Apollo, the name of one of the heathen gods, but Apollos, some think, the same with Apelles, Rom. xvi. 10.

2. He was a man of excellent good parts, and well fitted for publick service; he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures.

tures of the Old Testament, which he was, as a Jew, brought up in the knowledge of. (1.) He had a great command of language, he was an *eloquent man*; he was, *ἀνὴρ λόγιος*, a *prudent-man*, so some; a *learned man*, so others; *historiarum peritus*, a good historian; which is an excellent qualification for the ministry; he was one that could speak well, so it properly signifies; he was an *oracle of a man*; he was famous for speaking pertinently and closely, fully and fluently, upon any subject. (2.) He had a great command of scripture language, and that was the eloquence he was remarkable for; he came to *Ephesus*, being *mighty in the scriptures*, so the words are placed; having an excellent faculty of expounding scriptures, he came to *Ephesus*, which was a publick place to trade with that talent for the honour of God, and the good of many: He was not only ready in the scriptures, able to quote texts off-hand, and repeat them, and tell you where to find them; many of the carnal Jews were so, who are therefore said to have the *form of knowledge*, and the *letter of the law*; but he was *mighty in the scriptures*, he understood the sense and meaning of them, he knew how to make use of them, and to apply them, how to reason out of the scriptures, and to reason strongly; a convincing, commanding, confirming power went along with all his expositions and applications of the scripture: It is likely, he had given proof of his knowledge of the scriptures, and his abilities in them, in many *synagogues of the Jews*.

3. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, i. e. he had some acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ, had got some general notions of the gospel, and the principles of Christianity, that *Jesus is the Christ*, and that *Prophet that should come into the world*; the first notice of this would be readily embraced by one that was so mighty in the scripture as Apollos was, and therefore understood the signs of the times: He was instructed, *κατηχημένος*, he was catechised, so the word is, either by his parents, or ministers; he was taught something of Christ, and the way of salvation by him. Those that are to teach others, must first be themselves taught the word of the Lord, not only to talk of it, but to walk in it: It is not enough to have our tongues tuned to the word of the Lord, but we must have our feet directed into the way of the Lord.

4. Yet he knew only the baptism of John; he was instructed in the gospel of Christ, as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further; he knew the preparing of the way of the Lord, by that voice crying in the wilderness, rather than the way of the Lord itself: We cannot but think, he had heard of Christ's death and resurrection, but was not let into the mystery of them, had not had opportunity of conversing with any of the apostles since the pouring out of the Spirit; or, he had himself been baptized only with the baptism of John, but was not baptized with the holy Ghost, as the disciples were at the day of Pentecost.

Secondly, Here is the employment and improvement of his gifts at *Ephesus*; he came thither seeking opportunities of doing and getting good; and found both.

(1.) He there made a very good use of his gifts in publick; he came, probably, recommended to the *synagogue of the Jews*, as a fit man to be a teacher there, and, according to the light he had, and the measure of the gift given to him, he was willing to be employed, ver. 25. Being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord: Though he had not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostles had, he made use of the gifts he had; for the dispensation of the Spirit, whatever the measure of it is, is given to every man to profit withal: And our Saviour, by a parable, designed to teach his ministers, that though they had but one talent, they must not bury that.

We have seen how Apollos was qualified with a good head, and a good tongue; he was an *eloquent man*, and *mighty in the scriptures*; had laid in a good stock of useful knowledge, and had an excellent faculty of communicating it: Let us now see what he had further to recommend him as a preacher, and his example is recommended to the imitation of all preachers:

1. He was a lively, affectionate preacher; as he had a good head, so he had a good heart; he was *fervent in spirit*; he had in him a great deal of divine fire, as well as divine light; was burning, as well as shining: He was full of zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of precious souls: And this appeared both in his forwardness to preach when he was called to it by the rulers of the *synagogue*, and his fervency in his preaching; he preached as one in earnest, and that had his heart in his work. What a happy composition was here! Many are *fervent in spirit*, but are *weak in knowledge*, in scripture knowledge, and far to seek for proper words, and full of improper ones; and, on the other hand, many are *eloquent enough*, and *mighty in the scriptures*, and learned, and judicious, but they have no life, or fervency: Here was a complete man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work, that was both *eloquent and fervent*, full both of divine knowledge, and of divine affections.

2. He was an industrious, laborious preacher; he spake and taught diligently; he took pains in his preaching, what he delivered was elaborate, and he did not offer that to God, or to the *synagogue*, that either cost nothing, or cost him nothing; he first worked it upon his own heart, and then laboured to impress it on those he preached it to; he taught diligently, *ἀκριβῶς*, accurately, exactly; every thing he said was well-weighed.

No. CIII.

3. He was an evangelical preacher; though he knew only the baptism of John, yet that was the beginning of the gospel of Christ, and to that he kept close; for he taught the things of the Lord, of the Lord Christ, that tended to make way for him, and to set him up: The things pertaining to the kingdom of the Messiah, was the subject he chose to insist upon; not the things of the ceremonial law, though those would be pleasing to his Jewish auditors: Not the things of the Gentile philosophy, though he could have discoursed very well on those things; but the things of the Lord.

4. He was a courageous preacher; he began to speak boldly in the *synagogue*, as one that, having put a confidence in God, did not fear the face of man; he spoke as one that knew the truth of what he said, and had no doubt of it; and knew the worth of what he said, and was not afraid to suffer for it; in the *synagogue*, where the Jews not only were present, but had power, there he preached the things of God, which he knew they were prejudiced against.

(2.) He there made a good increase of his gifts in private, not so much in study, as in conversation with *Aquila and Priscilla*: If Paul, or some other apostle, or evangelist, had been at *Ephesus*, they would have instructed him; but, for want of better help, *Aquila and Priscilla*, that were tent-makers, expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. Observe,

1. *Aquila and Priscilla* heard him preach in the *synagogue*: Though in knowledge he was much inferior to them, yet, having excellent gifts for publick service, they encouraged his ministry, by a diligent and constant attendance upon it: Thus young ministers, that are hopeful, should be countenanced by grown Christians, for it becomes them to fulfil all righteousness.

2. Finding him defective in his knowledge of Christianity, they took him to them, to lodge in the same house with them, and expounded to him the way of God, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, more perfectly: They did not take occasion from what they observed of his deficiency either to despise him themselves, or to disparage him to others; did not call him a young, raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing no more but the baptism of John; and having themselves got great knowledge in the truths of the gospel, by their long and intimate conversation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, distinct, and methodical account of those things which before he had but confused notions of. 1. See here an instance of that which Christ has promised, that to him that hath, shall be given; that has, and uses what he has, he shall have more: He that diligently traded with the talent he had, doubled it quickly. 2. See an instance of truly Christian charity in *Aquila and Priscilla*, they did good according to their ability; *Aquila*, though a man of great knowledge, yet did not undertake to speak in the *synagogue*, because he had not such gifts for publick work as *Apollos* had, but he furnished *Apollos* with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words. Instructing young Christians, and young ministers, privately in conversation, who mean well, and perform well as far as they go, is a piece of very good service, both to them, and to the church. 3. See an instance of great humility in *Apollos*; he was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the university, a popular preacher, and mightily cried up and followed; and yet, finding that *Aquila and Priscilla* were judicious, serious Christians, that could speak intelligently and experimentally of the things of God, though they were but mechanicks, poor tent-makers, he was glad to receive instruction from them, to be shewed by them his defects and mistakes, and to have his mistakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up: Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old Christians, as young students in the law may by old practisers: *Apollos*, though he was instructed in the way of the Lord, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he understood Christianity as well as any man, which proud, conceited young men are apt to do, but was willing to have it expounded to him more perfectly: They that know much, should covet to know more, and what they know, to know it better, pressing forwards towards perfection. 4. Here is an instance of a good woman, though not permitted to speak in the church, or in the *synagogue*, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converse: Paul will have the aged women to be teachers of good things, Titus ii. 3, 4.

Thirdly, Here is his preferment to the service of the church of Corinth, which was a larger sphere of usefulness than *Ephesus* at present was: Paul had set the wheels a going in *Achaia*, and particularly at Corinth, the county town, many were stirred up by his preaching to receive the gospel, and they needed to be confirmed; and many were likewise irritated to oppose the gospel, and they needed to be confuted; Paul was gone, was called away to other work, and now there was a fair occasion in this vacancy for *Apollos* to set in, who was fitted rather to water, than to plant, to build up those that were within, than to bring in those that were without. Now here we have,

1. His call to this service, not by a vision, as Paul was called to Macedonia, no, nor so much as by the invitation of those he was to go to, but, 1. He himself inclined to go; he was disposed to pass into *Achaia*; having heard of the state of the churches there, he

had a mind to try what good he could do among them; though there were those there, who were eminent for *spiritual gifts*, yet Apollos thought there might be some work for him, and God disposed his mind that way. 2. His friends encouraged him to go, and approved of his purpose, and he being a perfect stranger there, they gave him a testimonial, or letters of recommendation, *exhorting the disciples in Achaia to entertain him, and employ him*: In this way, among others, the communion of churches is kept up, by the recommending of members and ministers to each other; that, as Apollos here, are disposed to remove: Though they at Ephesus had a great loss of his labours, they did not grudge them in Achaia the benefit of them; but, on the contrary, used their interest in them to introduce him; for the churches of Christ, though they are many, yet they are one.

2. His success in this service, which both ways answered his intention and expectation; for,

(1.) Believers were greatly edified, and they that had received the gospel were very much confirmed; *he helped them much which had believed through grace*. Note, 1. They that believe in Christ, it is *through grace* that they believe; it is *not of themselves*, it is *God's gift to them*, it is his work in them. 2. Those who *through grace do believe*, yet still have need of *help*, as long as they are here in this world, there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled. 3. Faithful ministers are capable of being many ways helpful to those *who through grace do believe*, and it is their business to *help them*, to *help them much*; and when a divine power goes along with them, they will be *helpful to them*.

(2.) Unbelievers were greatly mortified, their objections were fully answered, the folly and sophistry of their arguments was discovered, so that they had nothing to say in defence of the opposition they made to the gospel; their mouths were stopped, and their faces filled with shame, *ver. 28. He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly*, before the people; he did it, *ἐπιβνως*, earnestly, and with a great deal of vehemence; he took pains to do it; his heart was upon it, as one that was truly desirous, both to serve the cause of Christ, and to save the souls of men; he did it effectually, and to universal satisfaction; he did it, *levi negotio*; the case was so plain, and the arguments so strong on Christ's side, that it was an easy matter to baffle all that the Jews could say against it; though they were so fierce, yet their cause was so weak, that he made nothing of their opposition: Now that which he aimed to convince them of was, *that Jesus is the Christ*, that he is the *Messiah promised to the fathers, who should come*, and they were to look for no other: If the Jews were but convinced of this, *that Jesus is Christ*, even their own law would teach them to hear him. Note, The business of ministers is to preach Christ; *we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. The way he took to convince them was, *by the scriptures*; thence he fetched his arguments; for the Jews owned the scriptures to be of divine authority; and it was easy for him, who was *mighty in the scriptures*, from them to shew, *that Jesus is the Christ*. Note, Ministers must be able not only to preach the truth, but to prove it, and defend it, and to convince gainfayers with meekness, and yet with power instructing those that oppose themselves; and this is real service to the church.

C H A P. XIX.

He left Paul in his circuit visiting the churches, chap. xviii. 23. *but we have not forgot, nor has he, the promise he made to his friends at Ephesus, to return to them, and make some stay there; now this chapter shews us his performance of that promise, his coming to Ephesus, and his continuance there two years; we are here told, 1. How he laboured there in the word and doctrine, how he taught some weak believers that had gone no further than John's baptism, ver. 1,—7. how he taught three months in the synagogue of the Jews, ver. 8. and when he was driven thence, how he taught the Gentiles a long time in a publick school, ver. 9, 10. and how he confirmed his doctrine by miracles, ver. 11, 12. 2. What was the fruit of his labour, particularly among the conjurers, the worst of sinners; some were confounded that did but make use of his name, ver. 13,—17. but others were converted that received and embraced his doctrine, ver. 18,—20. 3. What projects he had of further usefulness, ver. 21, 22. and what trouble at length he met with at Ephesus from the silversmiths, which forced him thence to pursue the measures he had laid; how a mob was raised by Demetrius to cry up Diana, ver. 23,—34. and how it was suppressed and dispersed by the town-clerk, ver. 35,—41.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2. He said unto them, Have ye received the holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any holy Ghost. 3. And he said unto them, Unto what then

were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, That they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5. When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6. And when Paul had laid *his hands upon them*, the holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7. And all the men were about twelve.

Ephesus was a city of great note in Greece, famous for a temple built there to Diana, which was one of the wonders of the world; thither Paul came to preach the gospel while Apollos was at Corinth, *ver. 1.* while he was watering there, Paul was planting here; and grudged not that Apollos entered into his labours, and was building upon his foundation; but rejoiced in it, and went on in the new work that was cut out for him at Ephesus with the more cheerfulness and satisfaction, because he knew that such an able minister of the New Testament as Apollos was, was now at Corinth, carrying on the good work there; though there were those that made him the head of a party against Paul, *1 Cor. i. 12.* yet Paul had no jealousy of him, nor any way disliked the affection the people had for him. Paul having gone through the country of Galatia and Phrygia, *passed through the upper coasts*, Pontus and Bithynia, that lay north, at length came to Ephesus, where he had left Aquila and Priscilla, and there found them.

At his first coming he met with some disciples there, who professed faith in Christ as *the true Messiah*, but were as yet in the first and lowest form in the school of Christ, under his usher, John the baptist; they were in number about twelve, *ver. 7.* they were much of the standing that Apollos was of, when he came to Ephesus, for he knew only the baptism of John, chap. xviii. 25. but either they had not opportunity of being acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, or had not been so long in Ephesus, or were not so willing to receive instruction as Apollos was, otherwise they might have had *the way of God expounded to them more perfectly*, as Apollos had. Observe here,

First, How Paul catechised them; he was told, probably, by Aquila and Priscilla, that they were believers, that they did own Christ, and had given up their names to him; now Paul hereupon takes them under examination:

1. They did believe in the Son of God, but Paul enquires, whether they had *received the holy Ghost*, whether they *believed in the Spirit*, whose operations on the minds of men, for conviction, conversion, and comfort, were revealed some time after the doctrine of Jesus being the Christ; whether they had been acquainted with, and had admitted this revelation: That was not all, extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost were conferred upon the apostles, and other disciples, presently after Christ's ascension, which was frequently repeated upon occasion; had they participated of these gifts? *Have ye received the holy Ghost since ye believed?* Have you had that seal of the truth of Christ's doctrine in yourselves? We are not now to expect any such extraordinary gifts as they had then: The canon of the New Testament being long since compleated and ratified, we depend upon that as the most sure word of prophecy: But there are graces of the Spirit given to all believers, which are as earnest to them, *2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5. Eph. i. 13.* Now it concerns us all, who profess the Christian faith, seriously to enquire, whether we *have received the holy Ghost*, or not: The holy Ghost is promised to all believers, to all petitioners, *Luke xi. 13.* but many are deceived in this matter, that think they *have received the holy Ghost*, when really they *have not*: As there are pretenders to the gifts of the holy Ghost, so there are to his graces and comforts; we should therefore strictly examine ourselves, *Have we received the holy Ghost since we believed?* The tree will be known by its fruits: Do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Are we led by the Spirit? Do we walk in the Spirit? Are we under the government of the Spirit?

2. They owned their ignorance in this matter; *whether there be a holy Ghost*, is more than we know; that there is a promise of the holy Ghost, we know from the scriptures of the Old Testament, and that that promise will be fulfilled in its season, we doubt not; but so much have we been out of the way of intelligence in this matter, that we have not so much as heard whether the holy Ghost be indeed yet given as a Spirit of prophecy. They knew (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that, according to the tradition of their nation, after the death of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachy, the holy Ghost departed from Israel, and went up; and they professed they had never heard of his return: They spake as if they expected it, and wondered they did not hear of it, and were ready to welcome the notice of it. The gospel light, like that of the morning, *shone more and more*, gradually; not only clearer and clearer, in the discovery of truths not before heard of, but further and further, in the discovery of them to persons that had not before heard of them.

3. Paul enquired how they came to be baptized, if they knew nothing of the holy Ghost; for if they were baptized by any of Christ's

Christ's ministers, they were instructed concerning *the holy Ghost*, and were *baptized in his name*. Know ye not that Jesus being glorified, consequently the holy Ghost is given; *unto what then were ye baptized?* This is strange and unaccountable; What! baptized, and yet know nothing of the holy Ghost? Surely, your baptism was a nullity, if you know nothing of the holy Ghost; for it is the receiving of the holy Ghost that is signified and sealed by that *washing of regeneration*. Ignorance of the holy Ghost, is as inconsistent with a sincere profession of Christianity, as ignorance of Christ is. And applying it to ourselves, it intimates, that those are baptized *to no purpose*, and have received the grace of God therein in vain, that do not receive and submit to the holy Ghost. It is also an enquiry we should often make, not only, *to whose honour we were born*; but, *into whose service we were baptized*; that we may study to answer the ends both of our birth and of our baptism. Let us often consider, *unto what we were baptized*, that we may live up to our baptism.

4. They own, that they were baptized *unto John's baptism*, εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα, that is, (as I take it) they were baptized in the name of John; not by John himself, he was far enough from any such thought, but by some weak well meaning disciple of his, that ignorantly kept up his name, as the head of a party, retaining the spirit and notion of those disciples of his, that were jealous of the growth of Christ's interest, and complained to him of it, John iii. 26. Some one or more of these, that found themselves much edified by John's baptism of *repentance for the remission of sins*, not thinking that the *kingdom of heaven*, which he spoke of as at hand, was so very near as it proved, run away with that notion, rested in what they had, and thought they could not do better than to persuade others to do so too; and so, ignorantly, in a blind zeal for John's doctrine, they baptized here and there one in John's name, or as it is here expressed *unto John's baptism*, looking no further themselves, nor directing those that baptized any further.

5. Paul explains to them the true intent and meaning of John's baptism, as principally referring to Jesus Christ, and so rectifies the mistake of those who had baptized them into the baptism of John, and had not directed them to look any further, but to rest in that. They that have been left in ignorance or led into error by any infelicities of their education, should not therefore be despised or rejected by those who are more knowing and orthodox; but should be compassionately instructed, and *better taught*, as those here were by Paul. 1. He owns that John's baptism was a very good thing, as far as it went; *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance*. By this baptism he obliged people to be sorry for their sins, and to confess them and turn from them; and to bring any to this, is a great point gained. But, 2. He shews them, that John's baptism had a further reference, and he never designed that those he baptized should rest there, but told them, *that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*; that his baptism of repentance was designed only to *prepare the way of the Lord*, and to dispose them to receive and entertain Christ, whom he left them big with expectations of; nay, whom he directed them to, *Behold the Lamb of God*. John was a great and good man; but he was only the harbinger, Christ is the Prince; his baptism was the porch which you were to pass through, not the house you were to rest in; and therefore it was *all wrong* for you to be baptized into the baptism of John.

6. When they were thus shewed the error they were led into, they thankfully accepted the discovery, and were *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, ver. 5. As for Apollos, of whom it was said, chap. xviii. 25. that he *knew the baptism of John*, that he rightly understood the meaning of it, when he was baptized with it, though he knew that *only*: yet when he *understood the way of God more perfectly*, he was not again baptized, no more than Christ's first disciples that had been baptized with *John's baptism*, and knew it referred to the Messiah at the door, and with an eye to that submitted to it, were baptized again: But *these here*, who received it only with an eye to John, and looked no further, as if he were their saviour, it was such a fundamental error, as was fatal to it, as it would have been for any to be baptized in the name of Paul, 1 Cor. i. 13. And therefore when they came to understand themselves better, they desired to be *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and were so. Not by Paul himself (as we have reason to think) but by some of those who attended him. It doth not therefore follow hence, that there was not an agreement between John's baptism, and Christ's; or that they were not for substance the same; much less doth it follow that those who have been once baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, (which is the appointed form of Christ's baptism) may be again baptized in the same name; for those that were here baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, had never been so baptized before.

Secondly, How Paul conferred the extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost upon them, ver. 6.

1. Paul solemnly *prayed to God*, to give them those gifts, signified by his *laying his hands on them*, which was a gesture used in blessing, by the patriarchs, especially in conveying the great trust of the promise, as Gen. xlviii. 15. The Spirit being the great promise of the New Testament, the apostles conveyed it by the *imposition of hands*; the Lord bless thee with that blessing, that blessing of blessings, Isa. xlv. 3.

2. God granted the thing he prayed for; *the holy Ghost came upon them* in a surprizing, over-powering manner, and *they spake with tongues and prophesied*, as the apostles did, and the first Gentile converts, Acts x. 44. This was intended to introduce the gospel at Ephesus, and to awaken in the minds of men an expectation of some great things from it; and some think, it was further designed to qualify these twelve men for the work of the ministry, and that these twelve were the elders of Ephesus, to whom Paul committed the care and conduct of that church. They had the spirit of prophecy, that they might understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God themselves, and the *gift of tongues*, that they might *preach them to every nation and language*. O! What a wonderful change was here made on a sudden with these men; they that but just now *had not so much as heard that there was a holy Ghost*, now are themselves filled with the holy Ghost; for the Spirit, like the wind, blows where, and when he listeth.

8. And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12. So that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Paul is here very busy at Ephesus to do good.

First, He begins as usual in the Jews synagogue, and makes the first offer of the gospel to them, that he might gather in the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, who were now scattered upon the mountains. Observe,

1. Where he preached to them; in their synagogue, ver. 8. as Christ used to do. He went and joined with them in their synagogue worship, to take off their prejudices against him, and to ingratiate himself with them, while there was any hope of winning upon them. Thus he would bear his testimony to publick worship on sabbath-days where there were no Christian assemblies yet formed, he frequented the Jewish assemblies, while the Jews were not as yet wholly cast off. Paul went into the synagogue because there he had them together, and had them, it might be hoped, in a good frame.

2. What he preached to them; *the things concerning the kingdom of God* among men, the great things which concerned God's dominion over men, and favour to them, and mens subjection to God, and happiness in God. He shewed them our obligations to God, and interest in him as our Creator, by which the kingdom of God was set up, the violation of those obligations, and the forfeiture of that interest by sin, by which the kingdom of God was pulled down, and the renewing of those obligations upon us, and the restoring of us to that interest again by the Redeemer, whereby the kingdom of God was again set up. Or, more particularly the things concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, which the Jews were in expectation of, and promised themselves great matters from; he opened the scriptures which spake concerning this, gave them a right notion of this kingdom, and shewed them their mistakes about it.

3. How he preached to them. 1. He preached argumentatively; he disputed; gave reasons, scripture reasons for what he preached, and answered objections, for the convincing of mens judgments and consciences, that they might not only believe, but might see cause to believe. He preached *διαλεγομένως* *dialogue-wise*; he put questions to them and received their answers; gave them leave to put questions to him, and answered them. 2. He preached affectionately; he persuaded; he used not only logical arguments, to enforce what he said upon their understandings, but *rhetorical* motives to impress what he said upon their affections, shewing them that the things he preached concerning the kingdom of God, were things concerning themselves, which they were nearly concerned in, and therefore ought to concern themselves about, 2 Cor. v. 11. *we persuade men*. Paul was a moving preacher, and was master of the art of persuasion. 3. He preached undauntedly, and with a holy resolution; he spake boldly, as one that had not the least doubt of the things he spoke of, nor the least distrust of him he spoke from, nor the least dread of them he spoke to.

4. How long he preached to them; *for the space of three months*; which was a competent time allowed them to consider of it; in that time those among them that belonged to the election of grace were called in, and the rest were left inexcusable. Thus long Paul preached the gospel *with much contention*, 1 Thes. ii. 2. yet he *did not fail nor was discouraged*.

5. What success his preaching had among them. 1. There were some that were persuaded to believe in Christ, some think that is intimated in that word, *persuading*; he prevailed with them. But, 2. Divers continued in their infidelity, and were confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity. When Paul called of them

before

before, and preached only some general things to them, they courted his stay among them, *chap. xviii. 20.* But now he settled among them, and his word came more closely to their consciences, they were soon weary of him. 1. They had an *invincible aversion* to the gospel of Christ *themselves*; they were *hardened and believed not*; they were resolved they would not believe, though the truth shone in their faces with never such a convincing light and evidence. Therefore they *believed not*, because they were *hardened*. 2. They did their utmost to raise and keep up in others an aversion to the gospel; they not only entered not into the kingdom of God themselves, but neither did they suffer those that *were entering to go in*; for *they spoke evil of that way before the multitude*, to prejudice them against it. Though they could not shew any manner of evil in it, yet they said all manner of evil concerning it. These sinners like the angels, that sinned, became Satans, adversaries, and devils, false accusers.

Secondly, When he had carried the matter as far as it would go in the synagogue of the Jews, and found that their opposition grew more obstinate, he left the synagogue, because he could not safely, or rather because he could not comfortably and successfully, continue in communion with them. Though their worship was such as he could join in, and they had not silenced him, nor forbidden him to preach among them; yet they drove him from them with their railing at those things which he spoke *concerning the kingdom of God*: They hated to be reformed, hated to be informed, and therefore he *departed from them*. Here we are sure there was a separation and no schism; for there was a just cause for it, and a clear call to it. Now observe,

1. When Paul departed from the Jews, he took the disciples with him, and *separated them*, to *save them from that untoward generation*, according to the charge Peter gave to his new converts, *Acts ii. 40.* lest they should be infected with the poisonous tongues of those blasphemers, he *separated them* which believed, to be the foundation of a Christian church, now they were a competent number to be incorporated, that others might attend with them upon the preaching of the gospel, and might upon their believing, be added to them. When Paul departed, there needed no more to *separate the disciples*; let him go where he will, they will follow him.

2. When Paul separated from the synagogue, he *set up a meeting* of his own, he *disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus*; he left the synagogue of the Jews, that he might go on with the more freedom in his work; still he disputed for Christ and Christianity, and was ready to answer all opponents whatsoever, in defence of them; and he had by this separation a double advantage. 1. That now his opportunities were more frequent: In the synagogue he could only preach every sabbath-day, *Acts xiii. 42.* But now he disputed *daily*, he set up a lecture every day, and thus redeemed time; those whose business would not permit them to come one day, might come another day; and those were welcome who *watched daily at these gates of wisdom*, and *waited daily at the posts of her doors*. 2. That now they were more open. To the synagogue of the Jews none might come, or could come, but Jews or proselytes; Gentiles were excluded; but when he set up a meeting in the school of Tyrannus, both Jews and Greeks attended his ministry, *ver. 10.* Thus as he describes this gale of opportunity at Ephesus, *1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9.* *a wide door and an effectual was opened to him*, though *there were many adversaries*. Some think this school of Tyrannus was a divinity school of the Jews, and such a one they commonly had in their great cities beside their synagogue; they called it *Beth-midrash*, The house of inquiry, or of repetition, and they went to that on the sabbath-day, after they had been in the synagogue; they go *from strength to strength*, from the *house of the sanctuary* to the *house of doctrine*. If this were such a school it shews, that though Paul left the synagogue, he left it gradually, and still kept as near it as he could, as he had done, *chap. xviii. 7.* But others think it was a philosophy school of the Gentiles belonging to one Tyrannus, or, a retiring place (for so the word *σχολή* sometimes signifies;) belonging to a principal man, or governor of the city; some convenient place it was which Paul and the disciples had the use of, either for love or money.

3. Here he continued his labours for *two years*, read his lectures, and disputed daily. These *two years* commence from the end of the *three months*, which he spent in the synagogue, *ver. 8.* and after they were ended he continued for some time in the country about preaching, therefore he might justly reckon it in all three years, as he doth *chap. xx. 31.*

4. The gospel hereby spread far and near, *ver. 10.* *All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus*; not only all that dwelt in Ephesus, but all that dwelt in that large province called Asia, which Ephesus was the head city of; Asia the less it was called. There was great resort to Ephesus from all parts of the country, for law, traffick, religion, or education, which gave Paul an opportunity of sending the report of the gospel, to all the towns and villages of that country. They all heard the *word of the Lord Jesus*. The gospel is Christ's word, it is a word concerning Christ. This they heard, or at least heard of it. Some of all sects, some out of all parts both in city and country, embraced this gospel, and entertained it, and by them it was communicated to others, and so they all *heard the word of the Lord Jesus*, or might have heard it. Probably Paul sometimes made excursions himself into the country to

preach the gospel, or sent his missionaries or assistants that attended him, and thus the word of the Lord was heard *throughout that region*. Now they that *sat in darkness saw a great light*.

Thirdly, God confirmed Paul's doctrine by miracles, which awakened peoples enquiries after it, fixed their affection to it, and engaged their belief of it, *ver. 11, 12.* I wonder we have not read of any miracle wrought by Paul since the casting of the evil spirit out of the damsel at Philippi; why did he not work miracles at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens? Or if he did, why are they not recorded? Was the success of the gospel without miracles in the kingdom of nature itself, such a miracle in the kingdom of grace, and the divine power which went along with it, such a proof of its divine original, that there needed no other? It is certain that at Corinth he wrought many miracles, though Luke has recorded none, for he tells them *2 Cor. xii. 12.* that the signs of his apostleship were among them, *in wonders and mighty deeds*.

But here at Ephesus we have a general account of the proofs of this kind which he gave of his divine mission.

1. They were special miracles, *Δυνάμεις ἰσχυραίαι*. God exerted powers that were not according to the common course of nature. *Virtutes non vulgares*. Things were done which could by no means be ascribed either to *chance*, or *second causes*: Or, they were not only, all miracles are, *out of the common road*; but they were even uncommon miracles, such miracles as had not been wrought by the hands of any other of the apostles: The opposers of the gospel were so prejudiced, that any miracles would not serve their turn; therefore God wrought *virtutes non quolibet*, so they render it, something above the common road of miracles.

2. It was not Paul that wrought them, *What's Paul, and what's Apollo?* But it was God that wrought them *by the hand of Paul*. He was but the instrument, God was the principal agent.

3. He not only cured the sick that were brought to him, or that he was brought to; but *from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons*; they got Paul's handkerchiefs, or his aprons (that is, say some) the aprons he wore when he worked at his trade, and the applying of them to the sick cured them immediately. Or, they brought the sick peoples handkerchiefs, or their girdles, or caps, or head-dresses, and laid them for a while to Paul's body, and then took them to the sick. The former is more probable. Now was fulfilled that word of Christ to his disciples, *greater works than these shall ye do*. We read of one that was cured by the touch of Christ's garment, when it was upon him, and he perceived that *virtue went out of him*; but here were people cured by Paul's garments when they were taken from him. Christ gave his apostles power *against unclean spirits* and *against all manner of sickness*, *Mat. x. 1.* And accordingly we find here, that those to whom Paul sent relief, had it in both these cases; *for the diseases departed from them*, and the *evil spirits went out of them*; which were both significant of the great design and blessed effect of the gospel, which was to heal spiritual diseases, and to free the souls of men from the power and dominion of Satan.

13. ¶ Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14. And there were seven sons of one Sceva a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. 15. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16. And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leapt on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. 19. Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

The preachers of the gospel were sent forth to carry on a war against Satan, and therein Christ went forth *conquering, and to conquer*. The casting of evil spirits out of those that were *possessed*, was one instance of Christ's victory over Satan; but to shew how many ways Christ triumphed over that great enemy, we have here in these verses two remarkable instances of the conquest of Satan, not only in those that were *violently possessed by him*, but in those that were *voluntarily devoted to him*.

First, Here is the confusion of some of Satan's servants, some vagabond Jews that were *exorcists*, who made use of Christ's name, profanely and wickedly in their diabolical enchantments, but were made to pay dear for their presumption. Observe,

1. The general character of those who were guilty of this presumption; they were Jews, but vagabond Jews, were of the Jewish nation

nation and religion, but went about from town to town, to get money by conjuring; they strolled about to tell people their fortunes, and pretended by spells and charms to cure diseases, and bring people to themselves that were melancholy, or distracted. They called themselves exorcists, because in doing their tricks they used forms of adjuration, by such and such commanding names. The superstitious Jews to put a reputation upon these magick arts, wickedly attributed the invention of them to Solomon. So *Josephus, Antiq. Lib. viii. chap. ii.* faith, that Solomon composed charms by which diseases are cured, and devils driven out, so as never to return. And that these operations continued common among the Jews to his time. And Christ seems to refer to this, *Mat. xii. 27. By whom do your children cast them out?*

2. A particular account of some at Ephesus that led this course of life, and came thither in their travels; they were *seven sons of one Sceva a Jew, and chief of the priests*, ver. 14. It is sad to see the house of Jacob thus degenerated, much more the house of Aaron, the family that was in a peculiar manner consecrated to God, that any of that race should be in league with Satan. Their Father was a *chief of the priests*, head of one of the twenty four courses of priests. One would think the temple would find both employment and encouragement enough for the sons of a chief priest, if they had been twice as many: But it is likely, it was a vain, rambling, rakish humour that took them all to turn mountebanks, and wander all the world over to cure mad folks.

3. The profaneness they were guilty of; *they took upon them to call over evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus*; not as those who had a veneration for Christ, and a confidence in his name, as we read of some who *cast out devils in Christ's name*, and yet did not follow with his disciples, *Luke ix. 49.* whom he would not have to be discouraged; but as those who were willing to try all methods to carry on their wicked trade; and, it should seem, had this design, if the evil spirits should yield to an adjuration in the name of Jesus by those that did not believe in him, they would say, it was no confirmation of his doctrine to those that did; for it was all one whether they believed it or no. If they should not yield to it, they would say, the name of Christ was not so powerful as the other names they used, which the devils had often by collusion yielded to. They said, *we adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preached*; not whom we believe in, or depend upon, or have authority from; but whom Paul preacheth, *q. d.* we will try what that name will do. The exorcists in the Romish church that pretend to cast the devil out of melancholy people by spells and charms which they understand not, and which not having any divine warrant, cannot be used in faith, are the followers of these vagabond Jews.

4. The confusion they were put to in this impious operations; let them not be deceived, God is not mocked, nor shall the glorious name of Jesus be prostituted to such a vile purpose as this; *what communion hath Christ with Belial?* 1. The evil spirit gave them a sharp reply, ver. 15. *Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?* I know that Jesus has conquered principalities and powers, and that Paul has authority in his name to *cast out devils*; but what power have you to command us in his name, or who gave you any such power? *What have you to do to declare the power of Jesus, or to take his covenant and commands into your mouths, seeing you hate his instructions,* Psal. l. 16, 17. This was extorted out of the mouth of the evil spirit by the power of God, to gain honour to the gospel, and to put those to shame that made an ill use of Christ's name. Anti-christian powers and factions, pretend a mighty zeal for Jesus and Paul, and to have authority from them; but when the matter comes to be looked into, it is a meer worldly, secular interest, that is to be thus supported; nay, it is an enmity to true religion; *Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?* 2. The man in whom the evil spirit was, gave them a warm reception, fell foul upon them, *leaped upon them*, in the height of his frenzy and rage, *overcame them* and all their enchantments, *prevailed against them*, and was quite too hard for them; so that *they fled out of the house, not only naked, but wounded*; their clothes pulled off their backs, and their heads broke. This is written for a warning to all those who name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity. That same enemy that overcomes them with his temptations, will overcome them with his terrors; and their adjuring him in Christ's name to let them alone, will be no security to them. If we resist the devil by a true and lively faith in Christ, he will flee from us; but if we think to resist him by the bare using of Christ's name, or any part of his word, as a spell or charm, he will prevail against us.

5. The general notice that was taken of this, and the good impression it made on many, ver. 17. *This was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus*; It was the common talk of the town; and the effect of it was, 1. That men were terrified; *fear fell on them all*. In this instance, they saw the malice of the devil, whom they served; and the power of Christ, whom they opposed; and both were awful considerations. They saw that the name of Christ was not to be dallied with, nor his religion compounded with the pagan superstitions. 2. That God was glorified; *the name of the Lord Jesus*, by which his faithful servants cast out devils, and cured diseases without any resistance, *was the more magnified*; for now it appeared to be *a name above every name*.

Secondly, Here is the conversion of others of Satan's servants, and the evidences of their conversion.

1. Those that had been guilty of wicked practices, confessed them, ver. 18. *Many that had believed and were baptized, but had not then been so particular as they might have been in the confession of their sins, were so terrified with these instances of the magnifying of the name of Jesus Christ, that they came to Paul, or some of the other ministers that were with him, and confessed what ill lives they had led, and what a great deal of secret wickedness their own consciences charged them with, which the world knew not of; secret frauds, and secret filthinesses; they shewed their deeds*; took shame to themselves, and gave glory to God, and warning to others. These confessions were not extorted from them, but were voluntary for the ease of their consciences, which the late miracles had struck a terror upon. Note, Where there is true contrition for sin, there will be an ingenuous confession of sin to God in every prayer, and to man whom we have offended, when the case requires it.

2. Those that had conversed with wicked books, burnt them, ver. 19. *Many also of them which used curious arts, τὰ κέρη, impertinent things, multa nihil ad se pertinentia latagentes, busybodies, so the word is used, 2 Thess. iii. 11. 1 Tim. v. 13. that traded in the study of magick and divination; in books of judicial astrology, casting of nativities, telling of fortunes, raising and laying of spirits, interpreting of dreams, predicting future events, and the like, to which, some think, are to be added plays, romances, love books, and unchaste and immodest poems, (histrionica, amatoria, saltatoria, Stres.) These having their consciences more awakened that even to see the evil of those practices which these books instructed them in, brought their books together, and burnt them before all men*. Ephesus was notorious for the use of these curious arts: The spells and charms were called *Literæ Ephesæ*: Here people furnished themselves with all those sorts of books, and procured tutors to instruct them in those black arts. It was therefore for the honour of Christ and his gospel, to have such a noble testimony borne against those curious arts, in a place where they were so much in vogue. It is taken for granted, that they were convinced of the evil of these curious arts, and resolved to deal in them no longer; but they did not think that enough unless they burnt their books. 1. Thus they shewed a holy indignation at the sins they had been guilty of; as the idolaters when they were brought to repentance, said to their idols, *get ye hence*, Isa. xxx. 22. and cast even those of *silver and gold to the moles and to the bats*, Isa. ii. 20. They thus took a pious revenge on those things that had been the instruments of sin to them, and proclaimed the force of their convictions of the evil of it, and that those very things were now detestable to them, as much as ever they had been delectable. 2. Thus they shewed their resolution never to return to the use of these arts, and the books which related to them, again. They were so fully convinced of the evil and danger of them, that they would not throw the book by, within reach of a recall, upon supposition, that it was possible they might change their mind; but being stedfastly resolved never to make use of them, they burnt them. 3. Thus they put away a temptation to return to them again; had they kept the books by them, there was danger lest when the heat of the present conviction was over, they should have the curiosity to look into them, and so be in danger of liking them and loving them again, and therefore they burnt them. Note, Those that truly repent of sin, will keep themselves as far as possible from the occasions of it. 4. Thus they prevented their doing mischief to others; if Judas had been by, he would have said, sell them, and give the money to the poor; or buy bibles and good books with it. But then, who could tell into whose hands these dangerous books might fall, and what mischief might be done by them; it is therefore the safest course, to commit them all to the flames. Those that are recovered from sin themselves, will do all they can to keep others from falling into it, and much more are afraid of laying an occasion of sin in others way. 5. Thus they shewed a contempt of the wealth of this world; for the price of the books was cast up, probably by those that persuaded them not to burn them, and it was found to be *fifty thousand pieces of silver*; which some compute to fifteen hundred pounds of our money. It is likely, the books were scarce, perhaps, prohibited, and therefore dear. Probably, they had cost them so much; yet being the *devil's books*, though they had been so foolish as to buy them, they did not think that would justify them in being so wicked as to sell them again. 6. Thus they publicly testified their joy for their conversion from these wicked practices, as Matthew did by the great feast he made when Christ had called him from the receipt of custom. These converts joined together in making this bonfire, and made it before all men: They might have burnt the books privately, every one in his own house, but they chose to do it together, by consent, and to do it at the high cross (as we say) that Christ and his grace in them might be the more magnified, and all about them the more edified.

Thirdly, Here is a general account of the progress and success of the gospel in and about Ephesus, ver. 20. *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*. It is a blessed sight to see the word of God growing, and prevailing mightily, as it did here.

1. To see it grow extensively, by the addition of many to the church; when still more and more are wrought upon by the gospel,

and wrought up into a conformity to it, then it grows ; when those that were least likely to yield to it, and that had been most stiff in their opposition to it, yet are captivated and brought into obedience to it, then it may be said to grow mightily.

2. To see it prevail intensively, by the advancement of those in knowledge and grace that are added to the church ; when strong corruptions are mortified, vicious habits changed, ill customs of long standing broken off, and pleasant, gainful, fashionable sins are abandoned, then it prevails mightily ; and Christ in it goes on conquering, and to conquer.

21. ¶ After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia, and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus ; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. 23. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silver-smith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen : 25. Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth : 26. Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath perswaded and turned away much people, saying, That they be no gods which are made with hands : 27. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought ; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia, and the world worshippeth. 28. And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 29. And the whole city was filled with confusion : and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. 30. And when Paul would have entred in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. 32. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another : for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. 33. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. 34. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 35. And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter ? 36. Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. 37. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddesses. 38. Wherefore if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies ; let them implead one another. 39. But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. 40. For we are in danger to be called in question for this days uprore, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. 41. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Paul is here brought into some trouble at Ephesus, just when he is foretasting to go thence, and to cut him out work elsewhere. See here,

1. How he laid his purpose of going to other places, ver. 21, 22. He was a man of vast designs for God, and was for making his influences as far diffusive as might be. Having spent above two years at Ephesus,

1. He designed a visit to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, especially of Philippi and Corinth, the chief cities of those provinces. ver. 21. There he had planted churches, and now is concerned to visit them. He purposed in the spirit ; either in his own spirit, not communicating his purpose as yet, but keeping it to himself ; or, by the conduct of the holy Spirit, who was his guide

in all his motions, and by whom he was led. He purposed to go see how the work of God went on in those places, that he might rectify what was amiss, and encourage what was good.

2. Thence he designed to go to Jerusalem, to visit the brethren there, and give an account to them of the prospering of the good pleasure of the Lord in his hand. And from thence he intended to go to Rome, to go see Rome, not as if he designed only the gratifying of his curiosity with the sight of that ancient famous city, but because it was an expression people commonly used, that they would go see Rome, would look about them there ; when that which he designed, was to see the Christians there, and to do them some service, Rom. i. 11. The good people at Rome were the glory of the city, which he longed for a sight of. Dr. Lightfoot supposeth, that it was upon the death of the emperor Claudius, who died the second year of Paul's being at Ephesus, that Paul thought of going to Rome, because while he lived the Jews were forbidden Rome, chap. xviii. 2.

3. He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, to give them notice of the visit he intended them, and to get their collection ready for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Soon after he wrote the first epistles to the Corinthians, designing to follow it himself, as appears, 1 Cor. iv. 17, 19. I have sent to you Timothy ; but I will myself come to you shortly, if the Lord will. For the present he stayed in Asia, in the country about Ephesus, founding churches.

2. How he was seconded in his purpose, and obliged to pursue it by the troubles which at length he met with at Ephesus. It was strange, he had been quiet there so long ; yet it should seem, he had met with trouble there not recorded in this story ; for in his epistle written at this time, he speaks of his having fought with beasts at Ephesus, 1 Cor. xv. 32. which seems to be meant of his being put to fight with wild beasts in the theatre, according to the barbarous treatment they sometimes gave the Christians : And he speaks of the trouble which came to them in Asia, near Ephesus, when he despaired of life, and received a sentence of death within himself, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

But in the trouble here related, he was worse frightened than hurt. In general, there arose no small stir about that way, ver. 23. Some Historians say, that that famous impostor Apollonius Tyanæus, who set up for a rival with Christ, and gave out himself, as Simon Magus, to be some great one, was at Ephesus about this time that Paul was there : But it seems the opposition he gave to the gospel was so insignificant, that St. Luke did not think it worth taking notice of. The disturbance he gives an account of was of another nature : Let us view the particulars of it. Here is,

First, A great complaint against Paul and the other preachers of the gospel, for drawing people off from the worship of Diana, and so spoiling the trade of the silver-smiths that worked for Diana's temple.

1. The complainant is Demetrius, a silver-smith, a principal man, it is likely, of the trade, and one that would be thought to understand and consult the interests of it more than others of the company. Whether he worked in other sort of plate, or no, we are not told ; but the most advantageous branch of his trade was making silver shrines for Diana, ver. 24. Some think these were medals stamped with the effigies of Diana, or her temple, or both ; others think, they were representations of the temple, with the image of Diana in it in miniature ; all of silver, but so small, that people might carry them about with them, as the papists do their crucifixes. Those that came from far to pay their devotions at the temple of Ephesus, when they went home bought these little temples, or shrines, to carry home with them, for the gratifying of the curiosity of their friends, and to preserve in their own minds the idea of that stately edifice. See how craftsmen, and crafty men too, above the rank of silver-smiths, make an advantage to themselves of peoples superstition, and serve their worldly ends by it.

2. The persons he appeals to, are not the magistrates, but the mob ; he called the craftsmen together, with the workmen of like occupation, a parcel of mechanicks who had no sense of any thing but their worldly interest, and these he endeavours to incense against Paul, who would be acted as little by reason, and as much by fury, as he could desire.

3. His complaint and representation is very full.

1. He lays it down for a principle, that the art and mystery of making silver shrines for the worshippers of Diana, was very necessary to be supported and kept up, ver. 25. Ye know that by this craft, we have not only our subsistence, and our necessary food, but our wealth ; we grow rich, and raise estates ; we live great, and have wherewithal to maintain our pleasures ; and therefore, whatever comes of it, we must not suffer this craft to grow into contempt. Note, It is natural for men to be jealous for that, whether right or wrong, by which they get their wealth : And many have for this reason alone, set themselves against the gospel of Christ, because it calls men off from those crafts which are unlawful, how much wealth soever is to be gotten by them.

2. He charges it upon Paul, that he had dissuaded men from worshipping idols : The words, as they are laid in the indictment, are, that he had asserted, they are no gods which are made with hands

hands, ver. 26. Could any truth be more plain and self-evident than this? Or any reasoning more cogent and convincing than those of the prophets? *The workman made it, therefore it is not God.* The first, and most genuine notion we have of God is, that he has his being of himself, and depends upon none; but that all things have their being from him, and their dependence on him; and then it must follow, *that those are no gods which are the creatures of mens fancy, and the work of mens hands*; yet this must be looked upon as an heretical and atheistical notion, and Paul as a criminal for maintaining it; not that they could advance any thing against this doctrine itself, but that the consequence of it was, that not only at Ephesus, the chief city, but almost throughout all Asia, among the country people, who were their best customers, and whom they thought they were surest of, he had *perswaded and turned away much people*, from the worship of Diana, so that there was not now such a demand for the *silver shrines*, as had been; nor such good rates given for them. There are those who will stickle for that which is most grossly absurd and unreasonable, and which carries along with it its own conviction of falshood, as this doth, *that those are gods which are made with hands*, if it have but human laws, and worldly interest and prescription on its side.

3. He minds them of the danger which their trade was in of going to decay; whatever toucheth that, toucheth them in a sensible tender part; if this doctrine gains credit, we are all undone, and may even shut up shop; *this our craft will be set at nought*, will be convicted, and put into an ill name, as superstition, and a cheat upon the world, and every body will run it down: *This our part*, so the word is, our interest, or share of trade and commerce, *κινδυνεύει ἡμῶν τὸ μέρος*, will not only come into danger of being lost, but it will *bring us into danger*, and we shall become not only beggars, but malefactors.

4. He pretends a mighty zeal for Diana, and a jealousy for her honour; *not only this our craft is in danger*, if that were all, he would not have you think that he would have spoken with so much warmth, but all his care is, lest *the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed*; and we would not, for all the world, see the diminution of the honour of that goddess, *whom all Asia, and the world worship*. See what the worship of Diana had to plead for itself, and what was the utmost which the most zealous bigots for it had to say in its behalf: 1. That it had pomp on its side; the magnificence of *the temple* was the thing that charmed them, the thing that chained them; they could not bear the thoughts of any thing that tended to the diminution, much less to the destruction of that. 2. That it had numbers on its side; *all Asia, and the world worship it*; and therefore it must needs be the right way of worship, let Paul say what he will to the contrary. Thus, because *all the world wanders after the beast, the dragon, the devil, the god of this world, gives him his power, and his seat, and great authority*, Rev. xiii. 2, 3.

Secondly, The popular resentment of this complaint; the charge was managed by a crafts-man, and was framed to incense the common people, and it had the desired effect; for on this occasion they shewed,

1. A great displeasure against the gospel, and the preachers of it; *they were full of wrath*, ver. 28. *full of fury and indignation*, so the word signifies: The crafts-men went stark mad, when they were told that their trade, and their idol, were both in danger.

2. A great jealousy for the honour of their goddess; *they cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians*; and we are resolved to stand by her, and live and die in the defence of her. Are there any that expose her to contempt, or threaten her destruction? let us alone to deal with them. Let Paul say never so much to prove *that those are no gods which are made with hands*, we will abide by it, that, whatever comes of other gods, and goddesses, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*: We must, and will, stand up for the religion of our country, which we have *received by tradition from our fathers*. Thus all people *walked every one in the name of their god*, and thought well of their own; much more should the servants of the true God do so, who can say, *This God is our God for ever and ever*.

3. A great disorder among themselves, ver. 29. *The whole city was full of confusion*; the common and natural effect of an intemperate zeal for a false religion; it throws all into confusion, dethrones reason, and enthrones passion, and men run together, not only not knowing one anothers minds, but not knowing their own.

Thirdly, The proceedings of the mob, under the power of these resentments, and how far they were carried.

1. They laid hands on some of *Paul's companions*, and hurried them *into the theatre*, ver. 29. Some think, with design there to make them *fight with beasts*, as Paul had sometimes done, ver. 29. or, perhaps, they intended only to abuse them, and to make them a spectacle to the crowd: Those they seized were *Gaius and Aristarchus*, of both whom we read elsewhere; *Gaius was of Derbe*, chap. xx. 4. *Aristarchus* is also there spoken of, and Col. iv. 10. They came with Paul from Macedonia, and that was their only

crime, that they were *Paul's companions in travel*, both in services and sufferings.

2. *Paul*, who had escaped being seized by them, when he perceived his friends in distress for his sake, *would have entered in unto the people*, to sacrifice himself, if there were no other remedy; rather than his friends should suffer upon his account; and it was an evidence of a generous spirit, and that he loved his neighbour as himself.

3. He was dissuaded from it by the kindness of his friends, that over-ruled him. 1. *The disciples suffered him not*, for it better became him to offer it, than it would have become them to suffer it: They had reason to say to Paul, as David's servants did to him, when he was for exposing himself in a piece of publick service, *Thou art worth ten thousand of us*, 2 Sam. xviii. 3. 2. Others of *his friends* interposed, to prevent his throwing of himself thus into the mouth of danger; they would treat him much worse than *Gaius and Aristarchus*, looking upon him as the ringleader of the party; and therefore better let them bear the brunt of the storm, than that he should venture into it, ver. 31. They were *certain of the chief of Asia*, the princes of Asia, *Ἀσασχαῖ*: The criticks tell us, they were *the chief of their priests*, or (as others) *the chief of their players*; whether they were converts to the Christian faith, and some such there were even of their priests and governors, or whether they were only well-wishers to Paul, as an ingenious good man, we are not told, only that they were *Paul's friends*. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that they kept up a respect and kindness for him, ever since he *fought with beasts in their theatre*, and were afraid he should be abused so again. Note, It is a friendly part to take more care of the lives and comforts of good men, than they do themselves. It would be a very hazardous adventure for Paul to go *into the theatre*; it was a thousand to one it cost him his life; and therefore Paul was over-ruled by *his friends* to obey the law of self-preservation, and hath taught us to keep out of the way of danger as long as we can, without going out of the way of duty: We may be called to lay down our lives, but not to throw away our lives: It would better become Paul to *venture into a synagogue, than into a theatre*.

4. The mob was in a perfect confusion, ver. 32. *Some cried one thing, and some another*, according as their fancies and passions, and, perhaps, the reports they received, led them; *some cried*, down with the Jews, others, down with Paul, but *the assembly was confused*, as not understanding one anothers minds, they contradicted one another, and were ready to fly in one anothers faces for it, but they did not understand their own; for the truth was, *the greater part knew not wherefore they were come together*; they knew not what began the riot, nor who; much less what business they had there; but, upon such occasions, the greatest part come only to enquire what the matter is; they follow the cry, follow the crowd, increase like a snow-ball, and where there are many, there will be more.

5. The Jews would have interested themselves in this tumult; in other places they had been the first movers of such riots, but now at Ephesus they had not interest enough to raise the mob; and yet, when it was raised, they had ill-will enough to set in with it, ver. 33. *They drew Alexander out of the multitude*, called him out to speak on the behalf of *the Jews*, against *Paul*, and *his companions*; you have heard what Demetrius and the silver-smiths have to say against them, as enemies to their religion; give us leave now to tell you what we have to say against him as an enemy to our religion; *the Jews put him forward* to do this, encouraged him, and told him they would stand by him, and second him; and this they looked upon as necessary in their own defence, and therefore what he designed to say is called his *apologizing to the people*, not for himself in particular, but for *the Jews* in general, whom the worshippers of Diana looked upon to be as much their enemies as Paul was; now they would have them know, that they were as much Paul's enemies as they were; and they who are thus careful to distinguish themselves from the servants of Christ now, and are afraid of being taken for them, shall have their doom accordingly in the great day. *Alexander beckned with the baxa*, desiring to be heard against Paul; for it had been strange if a persecution were carried on against the Christians, and there were not Jews at one end or the other of it; if they could not begin the mischief, they would help it forward, and so make *themselves partakers of other mens sins*. Some think, this Alexander had been a Christian, but had apostatized to Judaism, and therefore was drawn out as a proper person to accuse Paul; and that he was that *Alexander the copper-smith* that did Paul so much evil, 2 Tim. iv. 14. and whom he had *delivered unto Satan*, 1 Tim. i. 20.

6. This occasioned the prosecutors to drop the prosecution of *Paul's friends*, and to turn it into acclamations in honour of their goddess, ver. 34. *When they knew that he was a Jew*, and, as such, an enemy to the worship of Diana; for *the Jews* had now an implacable hatred to idols, and idolatry; whatever he had to say for Paul, or against him, they were resolved not to hear him, and therefore set the mob a shouting, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*; whoever runs her down, be he Jew or Christian, we are resolved to cry her up; *she is Diana of the Ephesians*, our Diana; and it is our honour and happiness to have her temple with us; and she is *great*, a famous goddess, and universally adored; there

are other Dianas, but *Diana of the Ephesians* is beyond them all, because her temple is more rich and magnificent than any of theirs: This was all the cry for *two hours* together; and it was thought a sufficient confutation of Paul's doctrine, *that they are not gods which are made with hands*: And thus the most sacred truths are often run down with nothing else but noise, and clamour, and popular fury! It was said of old, concerning idolaters, *that they were mad upon their idols*; and here is an instance of it: Diana made the Ephesians great, for the town was enriched by the vast concourse of people from all parts to Diana's temple there, and therefore they are concerned, by all means possible, to keep up her sinking reputation, with, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.

Fourthly, The suppressing and dispersing of these rioters, by the prudence and vigilance of the *town-clerk*; he is called, *γεγραμμένος*, the scribe, or secretary, or recorder; the governor of the city, so some; the register of their games, the Olympick games, so some; whose business it was to preserve the names of the victors, and the prizes they won: With much ado, he, at length, stilled the noise, so as to be heard, and then made a pacifick speech to them, and gave us an instance of that of Solomon, *The words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that rules among fools*, as Demetrius did, *Eccles. ix. 17*.

1. He humours them with an acknowledgment, *that Diana was the celebrated goddess of the Ephesians*, ver. 35. they needed not to be so loud and strenuous in asserting a truth which no body denied, or could be ignorant of: Every one *knows that the city of the Ephesians was a worshipper of the great goddess Diana*, was, *προχρηστού*, not only that the inhabitants were worshippers of this goddess, but the city, as a corporation, was, by its charter, intrusted with the worship of Diana, to take care of her temple, and to accommodate those who came thither to do her homage: Ephesus is the *ædificia* (they say that is the most proper word) or the *sanctuary* of the great goddess Diana: The city was more the patroness and protectress of Diana, than Diana was of the city: Such a mighty care did idolaters take for the keeping up the worship of gods made with hands, while the worship of the true and living God is neglected; and few nations or cities glory in patronizing and protecting that! The temple of Diana at Ephesus was a very rich and sumptuous structure, but, it it should seem, the image of Diana in the temple, because they thought it sanctified the temple, was had in greater veneration than the temple, for they persuaded the people that it fell down from Jupiter, and therefore was none of the gods that were made with mens hands. See how easily the credulity of superstitious people is imposed upon by the fraud of designing men! Because this image of Diana had been set up time out of mind, and no body could tell who made it, they made the people believe it fell down from Jupiter.

Now these things, saith the town-clerk, very gravely (but whether seriously or no, and as one that did himself believe them, may be questioned) cannot be spoken against; they have obtained such universal credit, that you need not fear contradiction, it can do you no prejudice. Some take it thus; seeing the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter, as we all believe, then what is said against gods made with hands, doth not at all affect us.

2. He cautions them against all violent and tumultuous proceedings, which their religion did not need, nor could receive any real advantage from, ver. 36. *Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly*. A very good rule this is to be observed at all times, both in private and publick affairs, not to be hasty and precipitate in our motions, but to deliberate, and take time to consider; not to put ourselves or others into a heat, but to be calm and composed, and always keep reason in the throne, and passion under check. This word should be ready to us to command the peace with, when ourselves, or those about us, are growing disorderly; *We ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly*; to do nothing in haste, which we may repent of at leisure.

3. He wiped off the odium that had been cast upon Paul, and his associates, and tells them, they were not the men that they were represented to them to be, ver. 37. *Ye have brought hither these men, and you are ready to pull them to pieces, but have you considered what is their transgression, and what is their offence? What can you prove upon them? They are not robbers of churches, you cannot charge them with sacrilege, or the taking away of any dedicated thing; they have offered no violence to Diana's temple, or the treasures of it; nor are they blasphemers of your goddesses; they have not given any opprobrious language to the worshippers of Diana, nor spoken scurrilously of her, or her temple: Why should you prosecute them with all this violence? who, though they are not of your mind, yet do not inveigh with any bitterness against you: Since they are calm, why should you be hot? It was the idol in the heart that they levelled all their force against, by reason and argument; if they can but get that down, the idol in the temple will fall of course. Those that preach against idolatrous churches, have truth on their side, and ought vigorously to maintain it, and press it on mens consciences; but let them not be robbers of those churches (on the prey laid they not their hand, *Eccl. ix. 15, 16*.) nor blasphemers of those worships; with meekness instructing, not with passion and foul language reproaching, those that oppose themselves; for God's truth, as it needs not*

man's lye, so it needs not man's intemperate heat: *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*.

4. He turns them over to the regular methods of the law, which ought always to supersede popular tumults, and in civilized well governed nations will do so: And a great mercy it is to live in a country where provision is made for the keeping of the peace, and the administration of publick justice, and the appointing a remedy for every wrong; and herein we of this nation are as happy as any people.

(1.) If the complaint was of a private injury, let them have recourse to the judges, and courts of justice, which were kept publicly at stated times: If Demetrius, and the company of the silversmiths, that have made all this rout, find themselves aggrieved, or any privilege, they are legally intitled to, infringed, or intrenched upon, let them bring their action, take out a process, and the matter shall be fairly tried, and justice done: *The law is open, and there are deputies*; there is a præconsul, and his delegate, whose business it is to hear both sides, and to determine according to equity, and in their determination all parties must acquiesce, and not be their own judges, nor appeal to the people. Note, *The law is good if a man use it lawfully*, as the last remedy, both for the discovery of a right disputed, and the recovery of a right denied.

(2.) If the complaint was of a publick grievance, relating to the constitution, it must be redressed, not by a confused rabble, but by a convention of the states, ver. 39. *If ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, that are of a common concern, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly*, of the aldermen and common-council, called together in a regular way, by those in authority. Note, Private persons should not intermeddle in publick matters, so as to anticipate the counsels of those whose business it is to take cognizance of them; we have enough to do to mind our own business.

5. He makes them sensible of the danger they were in, and of the premunire they had run themselves into by this riot, ver. 40. It is well if we be not called in question for this day's uproar, if we be not complained of at the emperor's court, as a factious and seditious city, and if a *quo warranto* be not brought against us, and our charter taken away; for there is no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse, we have nothing to say in excuse of it; we cannot justify ourselves in breaking the peace, by saying, that others broke it first, and we only acted defensively; we have no colour for any such plea; and therefore let the matter go no further, for it has gone too far already. Note, Most people stand in awe of mens judgment, more than of the judgment of God. How well were it if we would thus still the tumult of our disorderly appetites and passions, and check the violence of them, with the consideration of the account we must shortly give to the Judge of heaven and earth for all these disorders! *We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar*, in our hearts, in our houses, and how shall we answer it? *there being no cause, no just cause, or no proportionable one, whereby we may give an account of this concourse*, and of this heat and violence. As we must repress the inordinancy of our appetites, so also of our passions, with this, that for all these things God will bring us into judgment, *Eccl. xi. 9*. and we are concerned to manage ourselves, as those that must give account.

6. When he had thus shewed them the absurdity of their riotous meeting, and the ill consequences that might follow from it, he advised them to scatter with all speed, ver. 41. he dismissed the assembly, ordered the crier, perhaps, to give notice that all manner of persons should peaceably depart, and go about their own business, and they did so. See here, 1. How the over-ruling providence of God preserves the publick peace, by an unaccountable power over the spirits of men! and thus the world is kept in some order, and men are restrained from being as the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser. Considering what an impetuous, furious thing, what an ungovernable, untameable wild beast the mob is, when it is up, we shall see reason to acknowledge God's goodness that we are not always under the tyranny of it. *He stills the noise of the sea, the noise of her waves*, and (which is no less an instance of his almighty power) the tumult of the people, *Psal. lxxv. 7*. 2. See how many ways God has of protecting his people! perhaps, this town-clerk was no friend at all to Paul, or the gospel he preached, yet his human prudence is made to serve the divine purpose: *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all*.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Paul's travels up and down about Macedonia, Greece, and Asia, and his coming at length to Troas, ver. 1,—6. 2. A particular account of his spending one Lord's day at Troas, and his raising Eutychus to life there, ver. 7,—12. 3. His progress, or circuit, for the visiting of the churches he had planted, in his way towards Jerusalem, where he designed to be by the next feast of pentecost, ver. 13,—16. 4. The farewell sermon he preached to the presbyters of Ephesus, now he was leaving that country, ver. 17,—35. 5. The very joyful parting between him and them, ver. 36,—38. And in all these we find Paul

Paul very busy to serve Christ, and to do good to the souls of men, not only in the conversion of heathens, but the edification of Christians.

1. **A**ND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3. And there abode three months: and when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4. And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5. These going before, tarried for us at Troas. 6. And we sailed away from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days, where we abode seven days.

These travels of Paul which are thus briefly related, if all in them had been recorded that was memorable, and worthy to be written in letters of gold, *the world would not have contained the books that should be written*; and therefore we have only some general hints of occurrences, which therefore ought to be the more precious. Here is,

First, Paul's departure from Ephesus; he had tarried there longer than he had done at any one place since he was ordained to the apostleship of the Gentiles; and now it was time to think of removing for he must *preach in other cities also*; but after this, to the end of the scripture history of his life (which is all we can depend upon) we never find him breaking up fresh ground again, nor preaching *the gospel there where Christ had not been named*, as hitherto he had done, *Rom. xv. 20.* for in the close of the next chapter we find him made a prisoner, and so continued, and so left, at the end of this book.

1. Paul left Ephesus soon after the uproar was ceased, looking upon that disturbance he met with there to be an indication of providence to him not to stay there any longer, *ver. 1.* His remove might somewhat appease the rage of his adversaries, and gain better quarter for the Christians there. *Currenti cede furori.* It is good to lie by in a storm. Yet some think, that before he now left Ephesus, he wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians, and that his fighting with beasts at Ephesus, which he mentions in that epistle, was a figurative description of this uproar; but I rather take that literally.

2. He did not leave them abruptly, and in a fright, but took leave of them solemnly: *He called unto him the disciples*, the principal persons of the congregation, *and embraced them, took leave of them* (saith the Syriack) *with the kiss of love*, according to the usage of the primitive church. Loving friends know not how well they love one another till they come to part, and then it appears how near they lay to one another's hearts.

Secondly, His visitation of the Greek churches, which he had planted, and more than once watered, and which appear to have lain very near his heart.

1. He went first to Macedonia, *ver. 1.* according to his purpose before the uproar, *chap. xix. 21.* there he visited the churches of Philippi, and Thessalonica, and gave them much exhortation, *ver. 2.* Paul's visits to his friends were preaching visits, and his preaching was large and copious, *he gave them much exhortation*; he had a great deal to say to them, and did not stint himself in time; he exhorted them to many duties, in many cases, and (as some read it) *with many reasonings*: He enforced his exhortation with a great variety of motives and arguments.

2. He stayed three months in Greece, *ver. 2, 3. i. e. in Achaia*, as some think, for thither also he purposed to go, to Corinth, and thereabout, *chap. xix. 21.* and, no doubt, there also he gave the disciples much exhortation, to direct and confirm them, and engage them to cleave to the Lord.

Thirdly, The altering of his measures; for we cannot always stand to our purposes; accidents unforeseen put us upon new counsels, which oblige us to purpose with a proviso.

1. Paul was about to sail into Syria, to Antioch, from whence he was first sent out into the service of the Gentiles, and which therefore in his journies he generally contrived to take in his way; but he changed his mind, and resolved to return through Macedonia, the same way he came.

2. The reason was, because the Jews, expecting he would steer that course as usual, had way-laid him, designing to be the death of him; since they could not get him out of the way by stirring up both mobs and magistrates against him, which they had often attempted, they contrived to assassinate him. Some think, they laid wait for him, to rob him of the money that he was carrying to Jerusalem, for the relief of the poor saints there; but, considering how very spiteful the Jews were against him, I suppose they thirsted for his blood, more than for his money.

Fourthly, His companions in his travels when he went into Asia; they are here named, *ver. 4.* some of them were ministers, whether they were all so or no is not certain; Sopater of Berea, it is likely, is the same with Sosipater, who is mentioned *Rom. xvi. 21.* Timothy is reckoned among them, for though Paul, when he departed from Ephesus, *ver. 1.* left Timothy there, and afterwards wrote his first epistle to him thither, to direct him as an evangelist how to settle the church there, and in what hands to leave it; see *1 Tim. i. 3. iii. 14, 15.* which epistle was intended for direction to Timothy what to do, not only at Ephesus, where he now was, but also at other places where he should be in like manner left, or whither he should be sent to reside as an evangelist, and not to him only, but to other of the evangelists that attended Paul, and were in like manner employed; yet he soon followed him, and accompanied him, with others here named.

Now, one would think, this was no good husbandry to have all these worthy men accompanying Paul, for there was more need of them where Paul was not, than where he was; but so it was ordered,

1. That they might assist him in instructing such as by his preaching were awakened and startled; wherever Paul came, *the waters were stirred*, and then there was need of many hands to help the cripples in: It was time to strike, when the iron was hot.

2. That they might be trained up by him, and fitted for future service; *might fully know his doctrine, and manner of life*, *2 Tim. iii. 10.* Paul's bodily presence was weak and despicable, and therefore these friends of his accompanied him to put a reputation upon him, and to keep him in countenance, and to intimate to strangers, who would be apt to judge by the sight of the eye, that he had a great deal in him truly valuable, which was not discovered upon the outward appearance.

Fifthly, His coming to Troas, where he had appointed a general rendezvous of his friends.

1. They went before, and stayed for him at Troas, *ver. 5.* designing to go along with him to Jerusalem, as Trophimus particularly did, *chap. xxi. 29.* We should not think it hard to stay a while for good company in a journey.

2. Paul made the best of his way thither; and, it should seem, Luke was now in company with him; for he saith, *we sailed from Philippi*, *ver. 6.* and the first time we find him in his company was here at Troas, *chap. xvi. 11.* The days of unleavened bread are mentioned only to describe the time, not to intimate that Paul kept the passover, after the manner of the Jews; for just about this time he had written in his first epistle to the church of Corinth, and taught, that *Christ is our passover*, and a Christian life our feast of unleavened bread, *1 Cor. v. 7, 8.* and when the substance was come, the shadow was done away. He came to them to Troas, by sea, in five days, and, when he was there, stayed but seven days. There is no remedy but a great deal of time will unavoidably be lost in travelling to and fro by those who go about doing good, yet it shall not be put upon the score of lost time; Paul thought it worth while to bestow five days in going to Troas, though it was but for an opportunity of seven days stay there; but he knew, and so should we, how to redeem even journeying time, and make it turn to some good account.

7. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight. 8. And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together. 9. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

We have here an account of what passed at Troas the last of the seven days that Paul stayed there.

First, There was a solemn religious assembly of the Christians that were there, according to their constant custom, and the custom of all the churches.

1. The disciples came together, *ver. 7.* Though they read, and meditated, and prayed, and sung psalms apart, and thereby kept up their communion with God, yet that is not enough, they must come together to worship God in consort, and so keep up their communion with one another, by mutual countenance and assistance, and testify their spiritual communion with all good Christians: There ought to be stated times for the disciples of Christ to come together; though they cannot all come together in one place, yet as many as can.

2. They came together upon the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's day, Rev. i. 10. the Christian sabbath, celebrated to the honour of Christ, and the holy Spirit, in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on the first day of the week. This is here said to be the day when the disciples came together, i. e. when it was their practice to come together in all the churches. Note, The first day of the week is to be religiously observed by all the disciples of Christ, and it is a sign between Christ and them, for by this it is known that they are his disciples; and it is to be observed in solemn assemblies, which are as it were the courts held in the name of our Lord Jesus, and to his honour, by his ministers, the stewards of his courts, and to which all that hold from and under him owe suit and service, and at which they are to make their appearance, as tenants at their Lord's courts, and the first day of the week is appointed to be the court-day.

3. They were gathered together in an upper chamber, ver. 8. they had no temple or synagogue to meet in, no capacious, stately chapel, but met in a private house, in a garret: As they were few, and did not need, so they were poor, and could not build, a large meeting-place; yet they came together, in that despicable, inconvenient place. It will be no excuse for our absenting ourselves from religious assemblies, that the place of them is not so decent or so commodious as we would have it be.

4. They came together to break bread, i. e. to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper; that one instituted sign of breaking the bread, being put for all the rest: The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 16. In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us to be a sacrifice for our sins is commemorated, but the breaking of Christ's body to us to be food and a feast for our souls is signified. In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, celebrating the memorial of Christ's death in the former, with that of his resurrection in the latter; and both in consort, in a solemn assembly, to testify their joint concurrence in the same faith and worship.

Secondly, In this assembly Paul gave them a sermon, a long sermon, a farewell sermon, ver. 7.

1. He gave them a sermon, he preached to them; though they were disciples already, yet it was very necessary they should have the word of God preached to them, in order to their increase in knowledge and grace. Observe, The preaching of the gospel ought to accompany the sacraments; Moses read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, and then sprinkled the blood of the covenant, which the Lord had made with them concerning all these words, Exod. xxiv. 7, 8. What doth the seal signify without a writing?

2. It was a farewell sermon, he being ready to depart on the morrow; when he was gone they might have the same gospel preached, but not as he preached it; and therefore they must make the best use of him that they could while they had him: Farewell sermons use to be in a particular manner affecting both to the preacher and to the hearers.

3. It was a very long sermon, he continued his speech until midnight; for he had a great deal to say, and knew not that ever he should have another opportunity of preaching to them: After they had received the Lord's supper, he preached to them the duties they had thereby engaged themselves to, and the comforts they were interested in, and in this he was very large, and full, and particular: There may be occasion for ministers to preach, not only in season, but out of season: We know some that would have reproached Paul for this as a long-winded preacher that tired his hearers, but they were willing to hear, he saw them so, and therefore continued his speech; he continued it till midnight; perhaps, they met in the evening, for privacy, or in conformity to the example of the disciples, who came together on the first Christian sabbath in the evening: It is likely, he had preached to them in the morning, and yet thus lengthened out his evening sermon even till midnight; we wish we had the heads of this long sermon, but we may suppose it was for substance the same with his epistles: The meeting being continued till midnight, there were candles set up, many lights, ver. 8. that the hearers might turn to the scriptures Paul quoted, and see whether these things were so; and that this might prevent the reproach of their enemies, who said, they met in the night for works of darkness.

Thirdly, A young man, in the congregation, that slept at sermon, was killed by a fall out of the window, but raised to life again; his name signifies one that had good fortune, Eutychus, bene fortunatus, and he answered his name. Observe,

1. The infirmity with which he was overtaken: It is likely, his parents brought him, though but a boy, to the assembly, out of a desire to have him well instructed in the things of God, by such a preacher as Paul. Parents should bring their children to hear sermons, as soon as they can hear with understanding, Neh. viii. 2. even the little ones, Deut. xxix. 11. Now this youth was to be blamed, 1. That he presumptuously sat in the window, unglazed, perhaps, and so exposed himself, whereas, if he could have been content to sit on the floor, he had been safe: Boys that love to climb, or otherwise endanger themselves to the grief of their parents, consider not how much it is also an offence to God. 2. That

he slept, nay, he fell into a deep sleep, when Paul was preaching; which was a sign he did not duly attend to the things that Paul spoke of, though they were weighty things: The particular notice taking of his sleeping, makes us willing to hope none of the rest slept, though it was sleeping time, and after supper; but this youth fell fast asleep, he was carried away with it, so the word is; which intimates, that he strove against it, but was overpowered by it, and, at last, sunk down with sleep.

2. The calamity with which he was seized herein: He fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. Some think, the hand of Satan was in it, by the divine permission, and that he designed it for a disturbance to this assembly, and a reproach to Paul, and it. Others think, God designed it for a warning to all people to take heed of sleeping when they are hearing the word preached; and certainly we are to make that use of it: We must look upon it as an evil thing, as a bad sign of our low esteem of the word of God, and a great hindrance to our profiting by it: We must be afraid of it, do what we can to prevent our being sleepy, not compose ourselves to sleep, but get our hearts affected with the word we hear to such a degree, as may drive sleep far enough; let us watch and pray, that we enter not into this temptation, and, by it, into worse; let the punishment of Eutychus strike an awe upon us, and shew us how jealous God is in the matters of his worship; Be not deceived, God is not mocked: See how severely God visited an iniquity that seemed little, and but in a youth, and say, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Apply to this story that lamentation, Jer. ix. 20, 21. Hear the word of the Lord, for death is come up into our windows, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.

3. The miraculous mercy shewed him in his recovery to life again, ver. 10. It gave a present distraction to the assembly, and an interruption to Paul's preaching; but it proved an occasion of that which was a great confirmation to his preaching, and helped to set it home, and make it effectual.

(1.) Paul fell on the dead body, and embraced it, thereby expressing a great compassion to, and an affectionate concern for this young man; so far was he from saying, he was well enough served for minding so little what I said! Such tender spirits as Paul had, are much affected with sad accidents of this kind, and are far from judging and censuring those that fall under them, as if those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were sinners above all that dwell at Jerusalem; I tell you nay: But this was not all; his falling on him, and embracing him, was in imitation of Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 21. and Elisha, 2 Kings iv. 32. in order to the raising of him to life again; not that this could as a means contribute any thing to it, but as a sign it represented the descent of that divine power upon the dead body, for the putting of life into it again, which, at the same time, he inwardly, earnestly, and in faith prayed for.

(2.) He assured them that he was returned to life, and it would appear presently: Various speculations, we may suppose, this ill accident had occasioned in the congregation, but Paul puts an end to them all; Trouble not yourselves, be not in any disorder about it, let it not put you into any hurry, for his life is in him; he is not dead, but sleepeth; lay him a while upon a bed, and he will come to himself, for he is now alive. Thus, when Christ raised Lazarus, he said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me.

(3.) He returned to his work, immediately after this interruption, ver. 11. He came up again to the meeting, they broke bread together in a love feast, which usually attended the eucharist, in token of their communion with each other, and for the confirmation of friendship among them; and they talked a long while, even till break of day: Paul did not now go on in a continued discourse, as before, but he and his friends fell into a free conversation, the subject of which, no doubt, was good, and to the use of edifying. Christian conference is an excellent means of promoting holiness, comfort, and Christian love. They knew not when they should have Paul's company again, and therefore made the best use they could of it when they had it, and reckoned a night's sleep well lost for that purpose.

(4.) Before they parted, they brought the young man alive, into the congregation, every one congratulating him upon his return to life from the dead, and they were not a little comforted, ver. 12. It was the matter of great rejoicing among them, not only to the relations of the young man, but to the whole society, as it not only prevented the reproach that would otherwise have been cast upon them, but contributed very much to the credit of the gospel.

13. ¶ And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. 14. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15. And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. 16. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for

for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Paul is hastening towards Jerusalem, but strives to do all the good he can by the way, *as it were on the bye*; he had called at Troas, and done good there; and now, he makes a sort of a coasting voyage, the merchants would call it a trading voyage, going from place to place, and no doubt endeavouring to make every place he came to the better for him, as every good man should do.

First, He sent his companions by sea to Assos, but he himself was minded to go a foot, *ver. 13.* He had decreed or determined within himself, that whatever importunity should be used with him to the contrary, urging either his ease or his credit, or the conveniency of a ship that offered itself, or the company of his friends, he would foot it to Assos: And if the land-way which Paul took was the shorter way, yet it is taken notice of by the ancients as a rough way, (*Homar. Illiad. vi. and Eustathius upon him, say, it was enough to kill one to go on foot to Assos, Loxin. in loc.*) yet that way Paul would take;

1. That he might call on his friends by the way, and do good among them, either converting sinners, or edifying saints; and in both he was serving his great Master, and carrying on his great work. Or,

3. That he might enure himself to hardship, and not seem to indulge his ease. Thus he would by voluntary instances of mortification and self-denial, *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*, that he might make his sufferings for Christ, when he was called out to them, the more easy, *2 Tim. ii. 3.* We should use ourselves to deny ourselves.

Secondly, At Assos he went on board with his friends, there they took him in; for by this time he had enough of his walk, and was willing to betake himself to the other way of travelling; or, perhaps, he could not go any further by land, but was obliged to go by water. When Christ sent his disciples away by ship, and tarried behind himself, yet he came to them, and they took him in, *Mark vi. 45, 51.*

Thirdly, He made the best of his way to Jerusalem; his ship passed by Chios, *ver. 15.* touched at Samos, (these are places of note among the Greek writers, both poets, and historians.) They tarried a while at Trogyllium, the sea-port next to Samos; and the next day they came to Miletus, the sea-port that lay next to Ephesus; for *ver. 16.* he had determined not to go to Ephesus at this time, because he could not go thither, but he would be urged by his friends, whose importunity he could not resist, to make some stay with them there; and because he was resolved not to stay, he would not put himself into a temptation to stay; for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of pentecost. He had been at Jerusalem, about four or five years ago, *chap. xviii. 21, 22.* And now he was for going thither again to pay his continued respects to that church, which he was careful to keep a good correspondence with, that he might not be thought alienated from it by his commission to preach among the Gentiles. He aimed to be there by the feast of pentecost, because it was a time of concourse, which would give him an opportunity of propagating the gospel among the Jews and proselytes, who came from all parts to worship at the feast: and the feast of pentecost had been particularly made famous among the Christians, by the pouring out of the Spirit. Note, Men of business must fit themselves, and it will contribute to the expediting of it, to set time (with submission to providence) and strive to keep it; contriving to do that first which we judge to be most needful, and not suffering ourselves to be diverted from it. It is a pleasure to us to be with our friends, it diverts us, nothing more; but we must not by it be diverted from our work. When Paul has a call to Jerusalem, he will not loiter away the time in Asia, though he had more and kinder friends there. This is not the world we are to be together in; we hope to be so in the other world.

17. ¶ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 18. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which beset me by the lying in wait of the Jews: 20. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, 21. Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22. And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23. Save that the holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto my self, so that I might finish my

course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25. And now behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28. ¶ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33. I have coveted no mans silver, or gold, or apparel. 34. Ye, ye, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring I ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

It should seem the ship Paul and his companions were embarked in for Jerusalem, attended him on purpose, and stayed or moved as he pleased; for when he came to Miletus, he went ashore, and tarried there so long as to send for the elders of Ephesus to come to him thither; for if he should have gone up to Ephesus, he could never have got away from them. These elders or presbyters, some think, were those twelve who received the holy Ghost by Paul's hands, *chap. xix. 6.* But besides those, it is likely, Timothy had ordained other elders there for the service of that church, and the country about; these Paul sent for, that he might instruct and encourage them to go on in the work to which they had laid their hands. And what instructions he gave to them, they would give to the people under their charge.

It is a very pathetic and practical discourse with which Paul here takes leave of these elders, and has in it much of the excellent spirit of this good man.

1. He appeals to them concerning both his life and doctrine, all the time he had been in and about Ephesus, *ver. 18.* Ye know after what manner I have been with you, and how I have done the work of an apostle among you. He mentions this, 1. As a confirmation of his commission, and consequently of the doctrine he had preached among them. They all knew him to be a man of a serious, gracious, heavenly spirit, that he was no designing self-seeking man, as seducers used to be; he could not have been carried on with so much evenness and constancy in his services and sufferings, but by the power of divine grace. The temper of his mind, and the tenour both of his preaching and conversation was such, as plainly spoke that God was with him of a truth, and that he was acted and animated by a better spirit than his own. 2. As an instruction to them in whose hands the work was now left, to follow his example. You know after what manner I have been with you, how I have carried myself as a minister; in like manner be you with those that are committed to your charge when I am gone, *Phil. iv. 9.* What you have seen in me that is good, do.

1. His spirit and conversation were excellent and exemplary; they knew after what manner he had been among them, and how he had had his conversation towards them, in simplicity, and godly sincerity, *2 Cor. i. 12.* How holily, justly, and unblameably he behaved himself, and how gentle he was towards them, *1 Thess. ii. 7, 10.*

1. He had carried himself well all along, from the very first day that he came into Asia; at all seasons; the manner of his entering in among them was such as no body could find fault with. He appeared from the first day they knew him to be a man that aimed not only to do well but to do good, wherever he came. He was a man that was consistent with himself and all of a piece; take him where you would, he was the same at all seasons, did not turn with the wind, nor change with the weather, but was uniform, like a die, that throw it which way you will, lights on a square side.

2. He had made it his business to serve the Lord; to promote the honour of God, and the interest of Christ and his kingdom among them; he never served himself, nor made himself a servant of men, of their lusts and humours, nor was he a timeserver; but he made it his business to serve the Lord. In his ministry, in his whole conversation, he proved himself what he wrote himself, *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, Rom. i. 1.*

3. He had done his work *with all humility of mind*, *κατὰ πᾶσαν ταπεινότητα*, i. e. in all instances of condescension, modesty, and self-abasement. Though he was one that God had put a great deal of honour upon, and done a great deal of good by, yet he never took state upon him, nor kept people at a distance; but *conversed as freely and familiarly with the meanest* for their good, as if he had stood upon a level with them. He was willing to stoop to any service, and to make himself and his labours as *cheap* as they could desire. Note, Those that would in any office serve the Lord acceptably to him, and profitably to others, must do it with all *humility of mind*, Mat. xx. 26, 27.

4. He had always been very tender, affectionate, and compassionate among them; he had *served the Lord with many tears*. Paul was herein like his Master, oft in tears; in his praying, he *wept and made supplication*, Hos. xii. 4. In his preaching, what he had told them before, he told them again, *even weeping*, Phil. iii. 19. In his concern for them, though his acquaintance with them was but of a late standing, yet so near did they lie to his heart, that he *wept with them that wept*, and mingled his tears with theirs upon every occasion, which was very endearing.

5. He had struggled with many difficulties among them; he went on in his work in the face of much opposition, *many temptations*, trials of his patience and courage, such discouragements, as perhaps, were sometimes *temptations* to him, as to Jeremiah in a like case, to say, *I will not speak any more in the name of the Lord*, Jer. xx. 8, 9. These beset him *by the lying in wait of the Jews*, who still were plotting some mischief or other against him. Note, Those are the faithful servants of the Lord, that continue to serve him in the midst of troubles and perils that care not what enemies they make, so they can but approve themselves to their Master, and make him their friend. Paul's tears were owing to his *temptations*; his afflictions helped to excite his good affections.

2. His *preaching* was likewise such as it should be, ver. 20, 21. He came to Ephesus to preach the gospel of Christ among them, and he had been faithful both to them, and to him that appointed him.

1. He was a plain preacher, and one that delivered his message so as to be understood; this is intimated in two words, *I have shewed you, and have taught you*; he did not amuse them with nice speculations, nor lead them into, and then lose them in the clouds of lofty notions and expressions; but he shewed them the plain truths of the gospel, which were of greatest consequence and importance, and *taught them* as children are taught. *I have shewed you* the right way to happiness, and *taught you* to go in it.

He was a powerful preacher; intimated in his testifying to them; he preached as one upon oath, that was himself fully assured of the truth of what he preached, and was desirous to *convince* them of it, and to *influence* and *govern* them by it. He preached the gospel, not as a hawker proclaims news in the street, it is all one to him whether it be true or false, but as a conscientious witness gives in his evidence at the bar with the utmost seriousness and concern. Paul preached the gospel as a testimony to them, if they received it; but as a testimony against them, if they rejected it.

3. He was a *profitable* preacher; one that in all his preaching aimed at doing good to those he preached to; he studied that which was *profitable unto them*, which had a tendency to make them wise and good, wiser and better; to inform their judgments, and reform their hearts and lives. He preached *τὰ συμφέροντα*, such things as *brought with them* divine light and heat, and power to their souls. It is not enough not to preach that which is hurtful, which leads into error, or hardens in sin, but we must preach that which is *profitable*. *We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying*. Paul aimed to preach not that which was *pleasing*, but that which was *profitable*, and to *please* only in order to profit.

4. He was a painful preacher, very industrious and indefatigable in his work; he preached *publicly*, and *from house to house*. He did not confine himself to a corner, when he had opportunity of preaching in the great congregation; nor did he confine himself to the congregation, when there was occasion for private and personal instruction. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to preach the gospel *publicly*, nor did he grudge to bestow his pains *privately*, among a few when there was occasion for it. He preached *publicly*, to the flock that came together into the green pastures, and went *from house to house* to seek those that were weak and wandered; and did not think that the one would excuse him from the other. Ministers should in their private visits, and as they go *from house to house*, discourse of those things which they have taught *publicly*, repeat them, inculcate them, and explain them, if it be needful, asking, *have ye understood all these things?* and especially, help them to apply it to themselves, and their own case. God is said to *teach* his people *to profit*, Isa. xlviii. 17. Those teach for God, that *teach people to profit*.

5. He was a faithful preacher; he not only preached that which was *profitable*, but he preached *every thing* that he thought might be profitable, and *kept back* nothing; though the preaching of it might either cost him more pains, or be disobliging to some, and *expose* him to their ill-will. He declined not preaching whatever

he thought might be profitable, though it was not fashionable, nor to some acceptable. He did not *keep back* reproofs, when they were necessary, and would be profitable, for fear of offending; nor *keep back* the preaching of the cross, though he knew it was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, as the Romish missionaries in China lately did.

6. He was a catholic preacher; he *testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks*. Though he was born and bred a Jew, and had an entire affection for that nation, and was trained up in their prejudices against the Gentiles, yet he did not therefore confine himself to the Jews, and avoid the Gentiles; but preached as readily to them, as to the Jews; and conversed as freely with them. And, on the other hand, though he was called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and the Jews had an implacable enmity against him upon that score, had done him many an ill turn, and here at Ephesus were continually plotting against him, yet he did not therefore abandon them as reprobates, but continued to deal with them for their good. Ministers must preach the gospel with impartiality; for they are ministers of Christ for the universal church.

7. He was a truly Christian, evangelical preacher; he did not preach philosophical notions, or matters of doubtful disputation, nor did he preach politicks, or intermeddle at all with affairs of state or the civil government; but he preached *faith* and *repentance*, the two great gospel graces; the nature and necessity of them; these he urged upon all occasions.

1. *Repentance towards God*; that those who by sin had gone away from God, and were going further and further from him into a state of endless separation from him, should by true repentance look towards God, turn towards him, move towards him, and hasten to him. He preached repentance as God's great command, Acts xvii. 30. which we must obey, *that men should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*; so he explains it, Acts xxvi. 20. And he preached it as Christ's gift, in order to the remission of sins, Acts v. 31. and directed people to look up to him for it.

2. *Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*; We must by repentance look towards God as *our end*; and by faith towards Christ as *our way* to God. Sin must by repentance be abandoned and forsaken, and then Christ must by faith be relied on for the pardon of sin. Our repentance towards God is not sufficient, we must have a true faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, consenting to him as *our Lord*, and *our God*. For there is no coming to God, as penitent prodigals to a father, but in the strength and righteousness of Jesus Christ as Mediator.

Such a preacher as this, they all knew Paul had been; and if they will carry on the *same work*, they must walk in the *same spirit*, in the *same steps*.

Secondly, he declares his *expectation* of *sufferings* and *afflictions* in his present journey to Jerusalem, ver. 22, 23, 24. Let them not think that he quitted Asia now, for fear of persecution; no, he was so far from running away like a coward from the post of danger, that he was now like a hero hastening to the high places of the field, where the battle was likely to be hottest. *Now behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem*; which may be understood either,

1. Of the certain forelight he had of trouble before him. Though he was not yet *bound in body*, he was *bound in spirit*; he was in full expectation of trouble, and made it his daily business to prepare for it; he was *bound in spirit*, as all good Christians are *poor in spirit*, endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the will of God if they should be reduced to poverty. Or, 2. Of the strong impulse he was under from the Spirit of God working upon his spirit to go this journey; *I go bound in the spirit*, i. e. firmly resolved to proceed, and well assured that it is by a divine direction and influence that I am so, and not from any humour or design of my own. *I go led by the spirit*, and bound to follow him, wherever he leads me.

1. He doth not know *particularly*, the things that shall beset him at Jerusalem; whence the trouble shall spring, what shall be the occasion of it, what the circumstances, and to what degree it shall arise; God had not thought fit to reveal that to him. It is good for us to be kept in the dark concerning future events, that we may be always waiting on God and waiting for him. When we go abroad, it should be with this thought, we *know not the things that shall beset us*, not what a day, or a night, or an hour may bring forth; and therefore must refer ourselves to God, let him do with us as seemeth good in his eyes, and study to stand compleat in his whole will.

2. Yet he doth know in general, that there is a storm before him; for the prophets in every city he passed through, told him by the holy Ghost, that *bonds and afflictions* did abide him. Besides the common notice given to all Christians and ministers to expect and prepare for sufferings, Paul had particular intimations of an extraordinary trouble, greater and longer than any he had yet met with, that was now before him.

3. He fixeth a brave and heroick resolution to go on with his work, notwithstanding. It was a melancholy peal that was rung in his ears in every city, that *bonds and afflictions* did abide him; it was a hard case for a poor man to labour continually to do good, and to be so ill treated for his pains. Now it is worth while to enquire, how he bore it? He was *flesh and blood* as well as other men; he was so, and yet by the grace of God he was enabled to go on with

with his work, and to look with a gracious and generous contempt upon all the difficulties and discouragements he met with in it. Let us take it from his own mouth here, *ver. 24.* where he speaks not with obstinacy or ostentation, but with a holy humble resolution, *none of these things move me*, all my care is to proceed and to persevere in the way of my duty, and to finish well. Paul is here an example,

1. Of holy courage and resolution in our work, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in it; he saw them before him, but he made nothing of them. *None of these things move me, ἰδεντες λόγον ποιῶμαι, I make no account of them.* He did not lay these things to heart, Christ and heaven lay there. None of those things moved him, i. e. 1. They did not drive him off from his work; he did not tuck about, and go back again, when he saw the storm rise; but went on resolutely, preaching there where he knew how dear it would cost him. 2. They did not deprive him of his comfort, nor make him drive on heavily in his work; in midst of troubles he was as one unconcerned; in his patience he possessed his soul, and when he was as sorrowful, yet he was always rejoicing, and in all things more than a conqueror. Those that have their conversation in heaven, can look down not only upon the common troubles of this earth, but upon the threatening rage and malice of hell itself, and say, that none of these things move them, as knowing that none of these things can hurt them.

2. Of a holy contempt of life, and the continuance and comforts of it; *neither count I my life dear to myself.* Life is sweet, and is naturally dear to us, *all that a man has will he give for his life*; but all that a man has, and life too, will he give, who understands himself aright, and his own interest, rather than lose the favour of God, and hazard eternal life. Paul was of this mind; though to an eye of nature life is superlatively valuable, yet to an eye of faith it is comparatively despicable; it is not so dear, but it can be cheerfully parted with for Christ. This explains *Luke xiv. 26.* where we are required to hate our own lives not in a hasty passion, as Job and Jeremiah, but in a holy submission to the will of God, and a resolution to die for Christ, rather than to deny him.

3. Of a holy concern to go through with the work of life, which should be much more our care, than to secure either the outward comforts of it, or the continuance of it. Blessed Paul counts not his life dear in comparison with this, and resolves in the strength of Christ, *non propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*, that he never will to save his life, lose the ends of living. He is willing to spend his life in labour, to hazard his life in dangerous services, to waste it in toilsome services; nay, to lay down his life in martyrdom, so he may but answer the great intentions of his birth, of his baptism, and of his ordination to the apostleship.

Two things this great and good man is in care about, and if he gain them, it is no matter to him what comes of life.

1. That he may be found faithful to the trust reposed in him; that he may finish the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus, may do the work which he was sent into the world about, or rather, which he was sent into the church about; that he might compleat the service of his generation, might make full proof of his ministry; that he might go through the business of it, and others might reap the advantage of it to the utmost of what was designed; that he might, as is said of the two witnesses, finish his testimony, *Rev. xi. 7.* and might not do his work by halves. Observe, 1. The apostleship was a ministry, both to Christ and to the souls of men; and they that were called to it considered more the ministry of it, than the dignity or dominion of it; and if the apostles did so, much more ought the pastors and teachers to do so, and to be in the church as those that serve. 2. This ministry was received from the Lord Jesus; he intrusted them with it, and from him they received their charge; for him they do their work, in his name, in his strength, and to him they must give up their account. It was Christ that put them into the ministry, *1 Tim. i. 12.* It is he that carries them on in their ministry, and from him they have strength to do their services, and bear up under the hardships of it. 3. The work of this ministry was to testify the gospel of the grace of God, to publish it to the world, to prove it, and to recommend it, and being the gospel of the grace in God, it has enough in it to recommend itself; it is a proof of God's good-will to us, and a means of his good work in us; it shews him gracious towards us, and tends to make us gracious, and so is the gospel of the grace of God. Paul made it the business of his life to testify this, and desired not to live a day longer than he might be instrumental to spread the knowledge, and favour, and power of this gospel.

2. That he may finish well; he cares not when the period of his life comes, nor how, be it never so soon, never so sudden, never so sad as to outward circumstances, so that he may but finish his course with joy. 1. He looks upon his life as a course, a race, so the word is. Our life is a race set before us, *Heb. xii. 1.* This intimates, that we have our labours appointed us, for we were not sent into the world to be idle; and our limits appointed us, for we were not sent into the world to be here always; but to pass through the world, nay, to run through it; and it is soon run through, I may add, to run the gauntlet through it. 2. He counts upon the finishing of this course, and speaks of it as sure and near, and that which he had his thoughts continually upon. Dying is the end of our race, when we come off either with honour or shame. 3. He

is full of care to finish it well, which implies a holy desire of obtaining, and a holy fear of coming short. O that I may but finish my course with joy; and then all will be well, perfectly and eternally well. 4. He thinks nothing too much to do, or too hard to suffer, so that he might but finish well, finish with joy. We must look upon it as the business of our life, to provide for a joyful death; that we may not only die safely, but die comfortably.

Thirdly, Counting upon it that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals to their consciences concerning his integrity, and demands of them a testimony to it.

1. He tells them, that he was now taking his last leave of them, *ver. 25.* *I know that ye all, among whom I have been conversant preaching the kingdom of God, though you may have letters from me, shall never see my face again.* When any of us part with our friends we may say, and should say, we know not that ever we shall see one another again, our friends may be removed, or we ourselves may: But Paul here speaks it with assurance, by the spirit of prophecy, that these Ephesians should see his face no more; and we cannot think that he who spoke so doubtfully of that which he was not sure of, *ver. 22.* (*not knowing the things that shall befall me there*) should speak this with so much confidence, especially when he foresaw what a trouble it would be to his friends here, unless he had had a special warrant from the Spirit to say it; to whom I think they do wrong, who suppose that notwithstanding this, Paul did afterwards come to Ephesus, and see them again. He would never have said thus solemnly, *now, behold, I know it*, if he had not known it for certain. Not but that he foresaw that he had a great deal of time and work yet before him, but that his work would be cut out for him in other places, and in these parts he had no more to do. Here he had for a great while gone about preaching the kingdom of God, preaching down the kingdom of sin and Satan, and preaching up the authority and dominion of God in Christ; preaching the kingdom of glory as the end, and the kingdom of grace as the way; many a time they had been glad to see his face in the pulpit, and saw it as it had been the face of an angel. If the feet of these messengers of peace were beautiful upon the mountains, what were their faces? But now they shall see his face no more. Note, We ought often to think of it, that those who now are preaching to us the kingdom of God, will shortly be removed, and we shall see their faces no more; the prophets, do they live for ever? Yet a little while is their light with us; it concerns us therefore to improve it while we have it, that when we shall see their faces no more on earth, yet we may hope to look them in the face with comfort in the great day.

2. He appeals to them concerning the faithful discharge of his ministry among them, *ver. 26.* *Wherefore, seeing my ministry is at an end with you, it concerns both you and me to reflect, and look back; and, 1. He challengeth them to prove him unfaithful, or to have said or done any thing by which he had made himself accessory to the ruin of any precious soul. I am pure from the blood of all men, the blood of souls.* This plainly refers to that of the prophet *Ezek. xxxiii. 6.* where the blood of him that periseth by the sword of the enemy, is said to be required at the hand of the unfaithful watchmen that did not give warning; you cannot say but I have given warning, and therefore no man's blood can be laid at my door. If a minister has approved himself faithful, he may have this rejoicing in himself, *I am pure from the blood of all men*, and ought to have this testimony from others. 2. He therefore leaves the blood of them that perish upon their own heads, because they had fair warning given them, but they would not take it. 3. He charged these ministers to look to it, that they took care and pains as he had done; *I am pure from the blood of all men*, see that you keep yourselves so too. *I take you to record this day; ἐν τῇ σήμερον ἡμέρᾳ, I call this day to witness to you.* As sometimes the heavens and earth are appealed to, so here this day shall be a witness; this parting day.

3. He proves his own fidelity with this, *ver. 27.* *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* 1. He had preached to them nothing but the counsel of God, and had not added any inventions of his own; it was pure gospel and nothing else, the will of God concerning your salvation. The gospel is the counsel of God; it is admirably contrived by his wisdom, it is unalterably determined by his will, and it is kindly designed by his grace for our glory, *1 Cor. ii. 7.* This counsel of God it is the business of ministers to declare as it is revealed, and not otherwise, nor any further. 2. He had preached to them the whole counsel of God; as he had preached them the gospel pure, so he had preached it them entire; he had gone over a body of divinity among them, that having the truths of the gospel opened to them methodically from first to last, in order, they might the better understand them, by seeing them in their several connexions with, and dependences upon one another. 3. He had not shunned to do it; had not wilfully or designedly avoided the declaring of any part of the counsel of God. He had not to save his own pains declined preaching upon the most difficult parts of the gospel, nor to save his own credit, declined preaching upon the most plain and easy parts of it; he had not shunned preaching those doctrines which he knew would be provoking to the watchful enemies of Christianity, or displeasing to the careless professors of it, but faithfully took his work before him,

whether they would hear or forbear. And thus it was that he kept himself pure from the blood of all men.

Fourthly, He chargeth them as ministers to be diligent and faithful in their work.

1. He commits the care of the church at Ephesus, i. e. the Saints, the Christians that were there, and thereabouts, (Eph. i. 1.) to them; who though doubtless they were so numerous that they could not all meet in one place, but worshipped God in several congregations, under the conduct of several ministers, yet are called here *one flock*, because they not only agreed in *one faith*, as they did with all Christian churches, but in many instances they kept up communion one with another. To these elders or presbyters the apostle here upon the actual foresight of his own final leaving them, commits the government of this church, and tells them that not he but the *holy Ghost* had made them *overseers*, ἐπισκόπους, bishops of this flock, you that are presbyters are bishops of the holy Ghost's making, that are to take the oversight of this part of the church of God, 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. Tit. i. 5, 7. while Paul was present at Ephesus he presided in all the affairs of that church, which made the elders loth to part with him; but now this eagle stirs up the nest, flutters over her young; now they begin to be fledged, they must learn to fly themselves, and to act without him, for the *holy Ghost* had made them *overseers*. They took not this honour to themselves, nor was it conferred upon them by any prince or potentate, but the holy Ghost in them qualified them for, and enriched them to this great undertaking, the *holy Ghost* fell upon them, chap. xix. 6. The holy Ghost also directed them that chose and called, and ordained them to this work in answer to prayer.

2. He commanded them to mind the work to which they were called; dignity calls for duty; if the holy Ghost has made them *overseers of the flock*, that is shepherds, they must be true to their trust.

1. They must take heed to themselves in the first place, must have a very jealous eye upon all the motions of their own souls and upon all they said and did; must walk circumspectly, and know how to behave themselves aright in the house of God, in which they were now advanced to the office of stewards, you have many eyes upon you, some take example by you, others to pick quarrels with you, and therefore you ought to take heed to yourselves. Those are not likely to be skilful or faithful keepers of others vineyards that do not keep their own.

2. Take heed to the flock, to all the flock, some to one part of it, others to another, according as your call and opportunity is, but see that no part of it be neglected among you. Ministers must not only take heed to their own souls, but must have a constant regard to the souls of those which are under their charge, as shepherds have to their sheep, that they may receive no damage. Take heed to all the flock, that none of them, either of themselves wander from the fold, or be seized by the beasts of prey, that none of them be missing, or miscarry through your neglect.

3. They must feed the church of God, must do all the parts of the shepherd's office; must lead the sheep of Christ into the green pastures, must lay meat before them; must do what they can to heal those that are disordered, and have no appetite to their meat; must feed them with wholesome doctrine, with a tender evangelical discipline, and must see that nothing be wanting that is necessary in order to their being nourished up to eternal life. There is need of pastors not only to gather the church of God by the bringing in of those that are without, but to feed it by building up those that are within.

4. They must watch, ver. 31. as shepherds keep watch over their flocks by night; must be awake, and wakeful: must not give way to spiritual sloth, and slumber, but must stir up themselves to their business, and closely attend it. Watch thou in all things, 2 Tim. iv. 5. watch against every thing that will be hurtful to the flock, and watch to every thing that will be advantageous to it; improve every opportunity of doing it a kindness.

3. He gives them several good reasons why they should mind the business of their ministry.

1. Let them consider the interest of their Master, and his concern for the flock that was committed to their charge, ver. 28. It is the church which he has purchased with his own blood. 1. It is his own; you are but his servants to take care of it for him. It is your honour that you are employed for God, who will own you in his service; but then your carelessness and treachery is so much the worse if you neglect your work, for you wrong God and are false to him. From him you received the trust, and to him you must give up your account, and therefore take heed to yourselves. and if it be the church of God he expects you should shew your love to him, by feeding his sheep and lambs. 2. He hath purchased it; the world is God's by right of creation, but the church is his by right of redemption, and therefore it ought to be dear to us, for it was dear to him, because it cost him dear, and we cannot better shew it than by feeding his sheep, and his lambs. 3. This church of God is what he has purchased, not as Israel of old, when he gave men for them, and people for their life, Isa. xlii. 3, 4. but with his own blood. This proves that Christ is God, for he is called so here, where yet he is said to purchase the church with his own blood, the blood was his as man, yet so close is this union between the divine and human nature, that it is here called the blood of God, for it was

the blood of him who is God, and his being so, put such a dignity and worth into it as made it both a valuable ransom of us from all evil, and a valuable purchase for us of all good, nay, a purchase of us to Christ, to be to him a peculiar people; thine they were and thou gavest them me, in consideration of this, therefore feed the church of God because it is purchased at so dear a rate, did Christ lay down his life to purchase it, and shall his ministers be wanting in any care and pains to feed it? their neglect of its true interest is a contempt of the blood that purchased it.

2. Let them consider the danger that the flock was in of being made a prey to its adversaries, ver. 29, 30. If the flock be thus precious upon the account of its relation to God, and its redemption by Christ, then you are concerned to take heed both to yourselves and to it. Here are reasons for both,

1. Take heed to the flock, for wolves are abroad that seek to devour, ver. 29. I know this, that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you. 1. Some understand it of persecutors, that will inform against the Christians, and incense the magistrates against them, and will have no compassion on the flock. They thought because while Paul was with them the rage of the Jews was most against him, that when he was gone out of the country they should be quiet; no, saith he, after my departing you will find the persecuting spirit still working, therefore take heed to the flock, confirm them in the faith, comfort and encourage them that they may not either leave Christ for fear of suffering, or lose their peace and comfort in their sufferings. Ministers must take a more than ordinary care of the flock in times of persecution. 2. It is rather to be understood of seducers, and false teachers; probably he has an eye to those of the circumcision, that preached up the ceremonial law; these he calls *grievous wolves*, for though they came in *sheep's clothing*, nay, in *shepherds' clothing*, they made mischief in the congregations of Christians, sowed discord among them, drew away many from the pure gospel of Christ, and did all they could to blemish and defame those that adhered to it; not sparing the most valuable members of the flock; did stir up those whom they could influence to bite and devour them, Gal. v. 15. therefore they are called dogs, Phil. iii. 2. as here *wolves*. While Paul was at Ephesus they kept away, for they durst not face him, but when he was gone, then they entered in among them, and sowed their tares where he had sown the good seed. Therefore take heed to the flock, and do all you can to establish them in the truth, and to arm them against the insinuations of the false teachers.

2. Take heed to yourselves, for some shepherd will apostatize, ver. 30. Also of your own selves, among the members, nay, perhaps, among the ministers of your own church, among you that I am now speaking to (though I am willing to hope it doth not go so far as that) shall men arise speaking perverse things, i. e. things contrary to the right rule of the gospel, and destructive of the great intentions of it. Nay, they will pervert some sayings of the gospel, and wrest them to make them patronize their errors, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Even those that were well thought of among you, and that you had confidence in, will grow proud and conceited, and opinionative, and will refine upon the gospel, and will pretend with more nice and curious speculations to advance you to a higher form; but it is to draw away disciples after them, to make a party for themselves that shall admire them, and be led by them, and pin their faith upon their sleeve. Some read it, to draw away the disciples after them; those that are already disciples of Christ, draw them from him to follow them. Therefore take heed to yourselves; when you are told that some of you shall betray the gospel, you are each of you concerned to ask, Is it I? and to look well to yourselves. This was there fulfilled in Phygellus and Hermogenes, who turned away from Paul and the doctrine he had preached, 2 Tim. i. 15. and in Hymeneus, and Philetus, who concerning the truth erred, and overthrew the faith of some, 2 Tim. ii. 18. which explains this here. But though there were some such seducers, in the church of Ephesus, yet it should seem by St. Paul's epistle to that church, wherein we do not find such complaints and reprehensions as we meet with in some other of his epistles, that that church was not so much infected with false teachers, at least not so much infected with their false doctrine, as some other churches were; but its peace and purity were preserved by the blessing of God on the pains and vigilance of these presbyters, to whom the apostle in the actual foresight and consideration of the rise of heresies and schisms, as well as his own death, committed the government of this church.

3. Let them consider the great pains that Paul had taken in planting this church, ver. 31. Remember that by the space of three years (for so long he had been preaching in Ephesus, and the parts adjacent) I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears; and be not you negligent in building upon that foundation, which I was so diligent to lay. 1. Paul, like a faithful watchman, had warned them, and, by the warnings he gave men of the danger of their continuing in their Judaism and heathenism, he prevailed with them to embrace Christianity. 2. He warned every one, besides the publick warnings he gave in his preaching, he applied himself to particular persons according as he saw their case called for it, which he had something to say peculiar to. 3. He was constant in giving warning, he warned night and day, his time was filled up with this work; in the night, when he should have been resting himself, he was dealing with those he could not get to speak with

with in the day about their souls. 4. He was indefatigable in it, he *ceased not to warn*; though they were never so obstinate against his warnings, yet he did *not cease to warn*, not knowing but that at length they might, *by the grace of God*, be overcome: Though they were never so pliable to his warnings, yet he did not think that would be a sufficient excuse for him to desist, but still he warned them that were righteous *not to turn from their righteousness*, as he had warned them when they were wicked *to turn from their wickedness*, Ezek. iii. 18,—21. 5. He spoke to them about their souls with a great deal of affection and concern, he *warned them with tears*: As he had *served the Lord*, so he had served them, *with many tears*, ver. 19. He *warned them with tears* of compassion, thereby shewing how much he was himself affected with their misery and danger in a sinful state and way, that he might affect them with it. Thus Paul had begun the good work at Ephesus, thus free had he been of his pains, and why then should they be sparing of their pains in carrying it on?

Fifthly, He recommends them to a divine conduct and influence, ver. 32. *And now, brethren*, having given you this solemn charge and caution, *I commend you to God*: Now I have said what I have to say, *The Lord be with you*: I must leave you, but I leave you in good hands. They were in care what would become of them, how they should go on in their work, break through their difficulties, and what provision would be made for them, and their families. In answer to all these perplexities, Paul directs them to look up to God with an eye of faith, and beseeches God to look down on them with an eye of favour.

1. See here to whom he commends them; he calls them *brethren*, not only as Christians, but as ministers, and hereby encourageth them to hope in God, as he had done; for they and he were *brethren*.

(1.) He *commends them to God*, begs of God to provide for them, to take care of them, and to supply all their needs, and encourages them *to cast all their care upon him*, with an assurance *that he cared for them*. Whatever you want, *go to God*, let your eye be ever towards him, and your dependence upon him, in all your straits and difficulties; and let this be your comfort, that you have a *God to go to*, a God all-sufficient: *I commend you to God*, i. e. to his providence, and to the protection and care of that: It is enough that, whoever we are separated from, still we have *God nigh unto us*, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

(2.) He commits them *to the word of his grace*, by which some understand Christ; he is *the Word*, John i. 1. *the Word of life*, because life is treasured up for us in him, 1 John i. 1. and in the same sense he is here called *the word of God's grace*, because *from his fulness we receive grace for grace*: He *commends them to Christ*, puts them in his hand, as being his servants whom he would in a particular manner take care of. Paul *commends them not only to God*, and to his providence, but *to Christ*, and *his grace*, as Christ himself did his disciples when he was leaving them; *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*. It comes much to one, if by *the word of his grace* we understand the gospel of Christ, for it is Christ in *the word that is nigh unto us* for our support and encouragement, and his *word is spirit and life*: You will find much relief by acting faith on the providence of God, but much more by acting faith on the promises of the gospel. He *commends them to the word of Christ's grace*, which he spoke to his disciples when he *sent them forth*, the commission he gave them, with assurance that he would be *with them always to the end of the world*; take hold of that word, and God give you the benefit and comfort of it, and you need no more. He *commends them to the word of God's grace*, not only as the foundation of their hope, and the fountain of their joy, but as the rule of their walking: *I commend you to God*, as your Master whom you are to serve, and I have found him a good Master, *and to the word of his grace*, as cutting you out your work, and by which you are to govern yourselves; observe the precepts of this word, and then live upon the promises of it.

2. See here what he *commends them to the word of God's grace* for, not so much for a protection from their enemies, or a provision for their families, as for the spiritual blessings which they most needed, and ought most to value: They had received, and were intrusted to preach the gospel of *the grace of God*: Now he recommends them to that,

(1.) For their edification: *It is able* (the Spirit of grace working with it, and by it) *to build you up*, and you may depend upon that, while you keep close to it, and are deriving daily from it: Though you are already furnished with good gifts, yet *that is able to build you up*; there is that in it which you need to be better acquainted with, and more affected with. Note, Ministers, in preaching *the word of grace*, must aim at their own edification, as well as at the edification of others: The most grown Christians, while they are in this world, are capable of growing, and they will find *the word of grace* to have still more and more in it to contribute to their growth: It is still *able to build them up*.

(2.) For their glorification: *It is able to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*. *The word of God's grace* gives it, not only as it gives the knowledge of it, for *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*, but as it gives the promise of it, the promise of a *God that cannot lie*, and which is *yea, and amen, in Christ*; and by *the word*, as the ordinary vehicle, the

Spirit of grace is given (Acts x. 44.) *to be the seal of the promise, and the earnest of the eternal life promised*; and thus it is *the word of God's grace that gives us the inheritance*. Note, 1. Heaven is an *inheritance* which gives an indefeasible right to all the heirs; it is an *inheritance* like that of the Israelites in Canaan, which was *by promise*, and yet *by lot*, but was *sure to all the seed*. 2. This *inheritance* is entailed upon, and secured *to all those*, and those only, *that are sanctified*; for as those cannot be welcome guests to the holy God, or the holy society above, *that are unsanctified*; so really heaven would be no heaven to them; but *to all that are sanctified, that are born again*, and on whom *the image of God is renewed*, it is as sure as almighty power and eternal truth can make it: Those therefore that would make out a title to *that inheritance*, must make it sure *that they are among the sanctified*, are joined to them, and incorporated with them, and partake of the same image and nature; for we cannot expect to be among the glorified hereafter, unless we be among *the sanctified* here.

Sixthly, He recommends himself to them as an example of indifference to this world, and to every thing in it, which, if they would walk in the same Spirit, and in the same step, they would find to contribute greatly to their easy and comfortable passage through it. He had *recommended them to God*, and *to the word of his grace*, for spiritual blessings, which, without doubt, are the best blessings; but what shall they do for food for their families? an agreeable subsistence for themselves, and portions for their children? As to these, Paul saith, *do as I did*; and how was that? he here tells them,

1. That he never aimed at worldly wealth, ver. 33. *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*, nor do you, and then you will be easy. There were many in Ephesus, and many of those that had embraced the Christian faith, who were rich, had a great deal of money, and plate, and rich furniture, and wore very good clothes, and made a very good appearance. Now, 1. Paul was not ambitious to live like them; we may take it in this sense; *I never coveted to have so much silver and gold at command, as I see others have*; nor to wear such rich clothes as I see other wear; I neither condemn them, nor envy them; I can live comfortably and usefully, without living great. The false apostles desired *to make a fair shew in the flesh*, Gal. vi. 12. to make a figure in the world; but Paul did not do so; he *knew how to want, and how to be abased*. 2. He was not greedy *to receive from them*, either *silver, or gold, or apparel*; so far from being always craving, that he was not so much as *coveting*, nor desired them to allow him so and so for his pains among them, but was *content with such things as he had*; he never *made a gain of them*, 2 Cor. xii. 14. He could not only say with Moses, Numb. xvi. 15. and with Samuel, 1 Sam. xii. 3, 5. *Whose ox have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?* But whose kindness have I coveted, or asked? Or, to whom have I been burthenome? He protests against *desiring a gift*, Phil. iv. 17.

2. That he had worked for his living, and taken a deal of pains to get bread, ver. 34. *Yea, you yourselves know*, and have been eye-witnesses of it, *that these hands of mine have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me*; you have seen me busy and late cutting out tents and making them up, and they being commonly made of leather, it was very hard work. Observe, 1. Paul was sometimes reduced to necessities, and the want of the common supports of life, though he was so great a favourite of heaven, and so great a blessing to this earth. What an unthinking, unkind, and ungrateful world is this, that could let such a man as Paul be poor in it! 2. He desired no more than to have his necessities supplied; he did not work at his calling to enrich himself, but to maintain himself *with food and raiment*. 3. When he was to earn his bread, he did it by a manual occupation; Paul had a head and a tongue that he might have got more, but *these were these hands*, saith he, *that ministered to my necessities*. What pity was it that *these hands*, by the laying on of which the holy Ghost had been so often conferred, *these hands*, by which God had wrought special miracles, and both these at Ephesus too, Acts xxi. 11. should there be obliged to lay themselves to the needle and sheers, the awl and tacking-end, in tent-making, purely to get bread! Paul puts these presbyters (and others in them) in mind of this, that they may not think it strange if they be thus neglected, and yet to go on in their work, and make the best shift they can to live; the less encouragement they have from men, the more they shall have from God. 4. He worked not only for himself, but for the support of *them also that were with him*; that was hard indeed! it had better become them to have worked for him, to maintain him as their tutor, than he for them; but so it is, those that are willing to take the labouring oar, will find those about them willing they should have it: If Paul will work for the maintenance of his companions, he is welcome to do it.

3. That even then when he worked for the supply of his own necessities, yet he spared something out of what he got for the relief of others; for this he here obliges them to do, ver. 35. *I have shewed you all things*, i. e. in all the parts of your duty I have set you your copy, and given you a good example, and particularly in this, *that in labouring, we ought to support one another*. Some understand it of their supporting the cause of the gospel, by removing the prejudices which some conceived against Christianity.

as if the preachers of it made a gainful trade of their preaching, and that the gospel was only a trick to get money by, and pick peoples pockets: Now, that you may cut off occasion from those that seek occasion to reproach us, and so may support the weak among us, you would do well, for the present, to get your livelihood by the labour of your hands, and not to depend upon your ministry. But I rather understand it of their helping to support the sick and the poor, and those that could not labour, because it agrees with Paul's exhortation, Eph. iv. 28. *Let him labour, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* We must labour in an honest employment, not only that we may be able to live, but that we may be able to give.

This might seem a hard saying, and therefore Paul backs it with a saying of our Master's, which he would have them always to remember; *these words our Lord Jesus said*; it should seem, they were words he often used to his disciples, when he himself did so much good gratis, and bid them do so too, Matt. x. 8, 9. he added this saying, which, though no where recorded by the evangelists, yet Paul had by word of mouth from Peter, or some other of the disciples; and an excellent saying it is, and has something of a paradox in it; *It is more blessed to give, than to receive.* It is (saith Dr. Tillotson) a particular endearment of this admirable saying of our Saviour's to us, that, being omitted by the evangelists, and in danger of being lost and forgotten, it was thus happily retrieved by St. Paul, and recorded by St. Luke. *It is more blessed to give to others, than to receive from others*; not only more blessed to be rich, and so on the giving hand, than to be poor, and so on the receiving hand; every one will own that; but more blessed to do good with what we have, be it much or little, than to increase it, and make it more. The sentiment of the children of this world is contrary to this; they are afraid of giving; this giving (they say) undoes us all; but they are in hope of getting, every one for his gain from his quarter, Isa. lvi. 11. clear gain is with them the most blessed thing that can be; but Christ tells us, *It is more blessed, more excellent in itself, an evidence of a more excellent disposition of mind, and the way to a better blessedness at last, to give, than to receive.* It makes us more like to God, who gives to all, and receives from none; and to the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good. *It is more blessed to give our pains, than to receive pay for it, and what we should delight to do, if the necessities of ourselves and families would admit it. It is more pleasant to do good to the grateful, but it is more honourable to do good to the ungrateful, for then we have God to be our pay-master, who will reward in the resurrection of the just, what has not otherwise been recompensed.*

36. ¶ And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37. And they all wept sore, and fell on Pauls neck, and kissed him, 38. Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

After the parting sermon that Paul preached to the elders of Ephesus, which was very affecting, we have here the parting prayer and tears, which were yet more affecting; we can scarcely read the account here given of them, and meditate upon them, with dry eyes.

First, They parted with prayer, ver. 36. *And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.* And, no doubt, it was a prayer every way suited to the present mournful occasion: He committed them to God in this prayer, prayed that he would not leave them, but continue his presence with them.

1. It was a joint prayer; he not only prayed for them, but prayed with them, prayed with them all; that they might put up the same petitions for themselves, and one another, that he put up to God for them all; and that they might learn what to ask of God for themselves when he was gone. Publick prayers are so far from being intended to supersede our own secret prayers, and make them needless, that they are designed to quicken and encourage them, and to direct us in them. When we are alone, we should pray over the prayers that our ministers have put up with us.

2. It was a humble, reverent prayer; this was expressed by the posture they used; *he kneeled down, and prayed with them*; which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and significant both of adoration, and of petition, especially petition for the forgiveness of sin: St. Paul used it much, *I bow my knees*, Eph. iii. 14.

3. It was a prayer after sermon; and, we may suppose, he prayed over what he had preached; he had committed the care of the church at Ephesus to those elders, and now he prays that God would enable them faithfully to discharge this great trust reposed in them, and would give them those measures of wisdom and grace which it required; he prayed for the flock, and all that belonged to it, *that the great shepherd of the sheep would take care of them all, and keep them from being a prey to the grievous wolves*: Thus

he taught those ministers to pray for those they preached to, *that they might not labour in vain.*

4. It was a parting prayer; which might be likely to leave lasting impressions, as the farewell sermon did. It is good for friends when they part, to part with prayer; that by praying together just at parting, they may be enabled to pray the more feelingly one for another when they are parted, which is one part of our Christian duty, and an improvement of the communion of saints. *The Lord watch between us, and watch over us both, when we are absent the one from the other*, is a good parting prayer, Gen. xxxi. 49. As also that our next meeting may be either nearer heaven, or in heaven. Paul here followed the example of Christ, who, when he took leave of his disciples, after he had preached to them, prayed with them all, John xvii. 1.

Secondly, They parted with tears, abundance of tears, and most affectionate embraces, ver. 37, 38.

1. *They all wept sore*; we have reason to think, that Paul himself began; though he was determined to go, and saw his call clear to other work, yet he was sorry in his heart to leave them, and many a tear it cost him; he that was so oft in tears while he was with them, ver. 19, 31. no doubt, shed many at parting, so watering what he had sown among them: But the notice is taken of their tears, *they all wept sore*; there was not a dry eye among them; and, it is probable, the affectionate expressions Paul used in prayer set them a weeping: These were tears of love, and mutual endearment, like those of Jonathan and David, when they were forced to part, and *wept one with another, until* (as if they wept for strife) *David exceeded*, 1 Sam. xx. 41.

2. *They fell upon Paul's neck, and kissed him*, all, one after another, each bewailing his own loss; how can I part with this dear creature, this blessed Paul, saith one, in whom my life is in a manner bound up? Farewel, my dear friend, saith another, a thousand thanks to thee, and ten thousand to God for thee, and for all the pains thou hast taken with me for my good: And must we part? saith another; must I lose my spiritual father, nurse, and guide? What will become of us now, saith another, when we shall no more have him to apply to, and receive direction from? What shall I do, if the Lord take away my master from my head? *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.* Note, Those that are most loving, are commonly best beloved. Paul, that was a most affectionate friend himself, had friends that were very affectionate to him. These tears at parting with Paul, were a grateful return for all the tears he had shed in preaching to them, and praying with them. *He that watereth, shall be watered also himself.*

3. That which cut them to the heart thus, and made this place such a *Bochim*, such a place of weepers, was, *that word which Paul spake, that, he was certain, they should see his face no more.* If he had given them directions to follow him, as he did to those that were his usual companions, or any intimation that he would come hereafter and make them a visit, they could have borne this parting pretty well; but when they are told, *that they shall see his face no more*, in this world, that it is a final farewell they are now giving and taking, this makes it a great mourning; it makes the farewell just like a funeral, and puts them into this passion of weeping. There were other things for which they sorrowed, *that they should want the benefit of his publick performances, and see him no longer presiding in their assemblies, should have none of his personal counsels and comforts*; and, we hope, they sorrowed for their own sin, in not profiting more by his labours while they had him among them, and which had provoked God to order his remove; but that which gave the most sensible accent to their grief was, *that they should see his face no more*: And when our friends are separated from us by death, this is that consideration with which we raise up our mourning, *that we shall see their faces no more*; but we complain not of this as those that have no hope; for if our friends died in Christ, and we live to him, they are gone to see God's face, to behold his glory, with the reflexion of which their faces shine, and we hope to be with them shortly. Though we shall see their faces no more in this world, we hope to see them again in a better world, and to be there together for ever, and with the Lord.

Lastly, They accompanied him unto the ship; partly to shew their respect to him, they would bring him on his way as far as they could; and partly that they might have a little more of his company and conversation; if it must be the last interview, they will have as much from him as they can, and see the last of him. And we have reason to think, when they came to the water-side, and he was to go on board, their tears and embraces were repeated; for loth to part bids oft farewell. But this was a comfort to both sides, and soon turned this tide of passion, that the presence of Christ both went with him, and stayed with them.

C H A P. XXI.

We have, with a great deal of pleasure, attended the apostle in his travels throughout the Gentile nations to preach the gospel, and have seen a great harvest of souls gathered in to Christ; there we have seen likewise what persecutions he endured; yet still out of them all the Lord presently delivered him, 2 Tim. iii. 11. But now

now we are to attend him to Jerusalem; and there into lasting bonds; the days of his service now seem to be over, and nothing to remain but days of suffering, days of darkness, for they are many. It is a thousand pities that such a workman should be laid aside; yet so it is; and we must not only acquiesce, as his friends then did, saying, The will of the Lord be done; but we must believe, and shall find reason to do so, that Paul in the prison, and at the bar, is as truly glorifying God, and serving Christ's interest, as Paul in the pulpit was. In this chapter we have, 1. A journal of Paul's voyage from Ephesus to Cesarea, the next sea-port to Jerusalem, some places he touched at, and his landing there, ver. 1,—7. 2. The struggles he had with his friends at Cesarea, who mightily opposed his going up to Jerusalem, but could not prevail, ver. 8,—14. 3. Paul's journey from Cesarea to Jerusalem, and the kind entertainment which the Christians there gave him, ver. 15,—17. 4. The compliance with the persuasions of the brethren there, who advised him so far to compliment the Jews, as to go purify himself with an offering in the temple, as if he had had a vow, that it might appear he was no such enemy to the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, as he was reported to be, ver. 18,—26. 5. The turning of this very thing against him by the Jews, and the apprehending of him in the temple as a criminal thereupon, ver. 27,—30. 6. The fair escape he had of being pulled to pieces by the rabble, and the taking of him into fair and legal custody by the chief captain, who permitted him to speak for himself to the people, ver. 31,—40. And so we have him made a prisoner, and shall never have him otherwise, to the end of the history of this book.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had lunched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara. 2. And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. 3. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5. And when we had accomplished those days, we departed, and went our way, and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. 6. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. 7. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

We may observe here,

1. How much ado Paul had to get clear from Ephesus, intimated in the first words of the chapter, *after we were gotten from them*, were drawn from them as by violence: It was a force put upon both sides; Paul was loth to leave them, and they were as loth to part with him; and yet there was no remedy, but so it must be. When good people are taken away by death, they are, as it were, gotten from their friends here below, who struggled hard to have detained them, if possible.

2. What a prosperous voyage they had from thence; without any difficulty, *they came with a straight course*, by direct sailing, to Coos, a famous island in Greece; the next day to Rhodes, talked of for the Colossus there; thence to Patara, a famous port, the metropolis of Lycia, ver. 1. there they very happily found a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, the very course they were steering, ver. 2. Providence must be acknowledged when things happen thus opportunely, and we are favoured in some little circumstances that contribute to the expediting of our affairs; and we must say, *It is God that maketh our way perfect*. This ship that was bound for Phenicia, i. e. Tyre, they took the convenience of, *went on board, and set sail for Tyre*: In that voyage they discovered Cyprus, the island that Barnabas was of, and which he took care of, and therefore Paul did not visit it, but *we left it on the left hand*, ver. 3. sailed upon the coasts of Syria, and, at length, landed at Tyre, that celebrated mart of the nations, so it had been, but was now reduced; yet something of a trade it had still, *for there the ship was to unlade her burden*, and did so.

3. The halt that Paul made at Tyre; when he was got there, he was upon the coast of the land of Israel, and found now that he could compass the remainder of his journey within the time he had fixed.

(1.) At Tyre he found disciples, some that had embraced the gospel, and professed the Christian faith. Observe, Wherever Paul came, he enquired what disciples were there, found them out, and associated with them; for we know what is the usage of birds of a feather. When Christ was upon earth, though he went sometimes into the coasts of Tyre, yet he never went thither to preach the go-

spel there; nor did he think fit to afford to Tyre and Sidon the advantages which Chorazin and Bethsaida had, though he knew that if they had had them, they would have made a better improvement of them, Luke x. 13, 14. But after the enlarging of the gospel commission, Christ was preached at Tyre, and had disciples there; and to this, some think, that prophecy concerning Tyre had reference, Isa. xxiii. 18. *That her merchandise, and hire, should be holiness to the Lord*.

(2.) Paul, finding those disciples at Tyre, tarried there seven days, they urging him to stay with them as long as he could; he stayed seven days at Tyre, chap. xx. 6. and here so many days at Tyre, that he might be sure to spend one Lord's day with them, and so might have an opportunity of preaching publicly among them; for it is the desire of good men to do good wherever they come; and where we find disciples, we may either benefit them, or be benefited by them.

(3.) The disciples at Tyre were endowed with such gifts, that they could by the Spirit foretell the troubles Paul would meet with at Jerusalem; for the holy Ghost witnessed it in every city, chap. xx. 23. It being a thing that would be so much talked of when it came to pass, God saw fit to have it much prophesied of before, that peoples faith, instead of being offended, might be confirmed; and withal they were endowed with such graces, that, foreseeing his troubles, out of love to him, and concern for the church, especially the churches of the Gentiles, that could ill spare him, they begged of him that he would not go up to Jerusalem, for they hoped the decree was conditional; *If he go up, he will come into trouble there*; as the prediction to David, *that the men of Keilah will deliver him up*; that is, if he venture himself with them; and therefore they said to him by the Spirit, *that he should not go up*, because they concluded it would be most for the glory of God that he should continue at liberty; and it was not at all their fault to think so; and, consequently, to dissuade him; but it was their mistake; for his trial would be for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the gospel, and he knew it; and the importunity that was used with him to dissuade him from it, renders his pious and truly heroic resolution the more illustrious.

(4.) The disciples at Tyre, though they were none of Paul's converts, yet shewed a very great respect to Paul, whose usefulness in the church they had heard so much of, when he departed from Tyre, though they had had but seven days acquaintance with him, yet, as if he had been some great man, they all came together, with their wives and children, solemnly to take leave of him, to beg his blessing, and to bring him as far on his way as the sea would permit them. Note, 1. We should pay respect, not only to our own ministers that are over us in the Lord, and admonish us, and, for their work's sake among us, esteem them highly in love, but we must, as there is occasion, testify our love and respect to all the faithful ministers of Christ, both for his sake whose ministers they are, and for their work's sake among others. 2. We must, in a particular manner, honour those whom God hath singularly honoured, by making them eminently useful in their generation. 3. It is good to train up children in a respect to good people, and good ministers. This was particularly remarkable at Tyre, which we have not met with any where else, *that they brought their wives and children to attend Paul*, to do him the more honour, and to receive benefit by his instructions and prayers; and, as angry notice was taken of the children of the idolaters of Bethel that mocked a prophet, so, no doubt, gracious notice was taken of the children of the disciples at Tyre that honoured an apostle, as Christ accepted the hosanna's of the little children. 4. We should be good husbands of our opportunities, and make the utmost we can of them for the good of our souls. They brought Paul on his way, that they might have so much the more of his company, and his prayers. Some refer us to Psalm xlv. 12. as a prediction of this, *The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift*; for, it is probable, they made some presents to Paul at parting, as usual to our friends that are going to sea, Acts xxviii. 10.

4. They parted with prayer, as Paul and the Ephesian elders had done, chap. xx. 36. Thus Paul has taught us by example, as well as rule, *to pray always, to pray without ceasing*. We kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. Paul prayed for himself, prayed for them, prayed for all the churches; as he was much in prayer, so he was mighty in prayer. They prayed upon the shore, that their last farewell might be sanctified and sweetened with prayer. Those that are going to sea, should, when they quit the shore, commit themselves to God by prayer, and put themselves under his protection, as those that hope, even when they leave the terra firma, to find firm footing for their faith in the providence and promise of God. They kneeled down on the shore, though we may suppose it either stony or dirty, and there prayed. Paul would that men should pray every where, and so he did himself; and where he lift up his prayer, he bowed his knees: Mr. George Herbert saith, *kneeling never spoiled silk stockings*.

5. They parted at last, ver. 6. When we had taken our leave one of another, with the most affectionate embraces and expressions of love and grief, we took ship to be gone, and they returned home again, each complaining that this is a parting world. Observe how they disposed of themselves; we, that had a journey before us, took ship, thankful that we had a ship to carry us; and they, that

had no occasions to call them abroad, returned home again, thankful that they had a home to go to: *Rejoice Zebulun in thy going out, and Issachar in thy tents.* Paul left his blessing behind him with those that returned home, and they that stayed sent their prayers after them that went to sea.

6. Their arrival at Ptolemais, which was not far from Tyre, ver. 7. *We came to Ptolemais*, which, some think, is the same place with Accho, which we find in the tribe of Asher, Judg. i. 31. Paul begged leave to go a-shore there, to salute the brethren, to enquire of their state, and to testify his good-will to them; though he could not stay long with them, yet he would not pass by them without paying his respects to them, and he abode with them one day, perhaps, it was a Lord's day; better a short stay, than no visit.

8. And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, (which was one of the seven) and abode with him. 9. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. 10. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

We have here Paul and his company arrived at length at Cesarea, where he designed to make some stay, it being the place where the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles, and the holy Ghost fell upon them, Acts x. 1.

Now here we are told,

First, Who it was that entertained Paul and his company at Cesarea; he seldom had occasion to go to a publick house, but, wherever he came, some friend or other took him in, and bid him welcome. Observe, They that had sailed together, parted when the voyage was accomplished, according as their business was; they that were concerned in the cargo, stayed where the ship was to unlade her burden, ver. 3. others, when they came to Ptolemais, went as their occasions led them; but we that were of Paul's company, went where he went, and came to Cesarea. Those that travel together through this world, will separate at death, and then it will appear who are of Paul's company, and who are not. Now at Cesarea,

1. They were entertained by Philip the evangelist, whom we left at Cesarea many years ago, after he had baptized the eunuch, Acts viii. 40. and there we now find him again. 1. He was originally a deacon, one of the seven, that were chosen to serve tables, chap. vi. 5. 2. He was now, and had been long, an evangelist, one that went about to plant and water churches, as the apostles did, and gave himself, as they did, to the word, and prayer; thus, having used the office of a deacon well, he purchased to himself a good degree; and having been faithful in a few things, was made ruler over many things. 3. He had a house at Cesarea, fit to entertain Paul and all his company, and he bid him and them very welcome to it: *We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, and we abode with him.* Thus doth it become Christians and ministers, according as their ability is, to use hospitality one to another, without grudging, 1 Pet. iv. 9.

2. This Philip had four maiden daughters, which did prophesy, ver. 9. it intimates, that they prophesied of Paul's troubles at Jerusalem, as others had done, and dissuaded him from going; or, perhaps, they prophesied for his comfort and encouragement, in reference to the difficulties that were before him. Here was a further accomplishment of that prophecy, Joel ii. 28. of such a plentiful pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh, as that their sons and their daughters should prophesy, i. e. foretell things to come.

Secondly, A plain and full prediction of the sufferings of Paul, by a noted prophet, ver. 10, 11.

1. Paul and his company tarried many days at Cesarea; perhaps, Cornelius was yet living there, and (though Philip lodged them) yet might be many ways kind to them, and induce them to stay there. What cause Paul saw to tarry so long there, and to make so little haste at the latter end of his journey to Jerusalem, when he seemed so much in haste at the beginning of it, we cannot tell; but we are sure he did not stay, either there, or any where else, to be idle; he measured his time by days, and numbered them.

2. Agabus the prophet came to Cesarea from Judea; this was he that we read of before, who came from Jerusalem to Antioch, to foretell a general famine, chap. xi. 27, 28. See how God dispenseth his gifts variously! to Paul was given the word of wisdom and knowledge, as an apostle, by the Spirit; and the gifts of healing; to Agabus, and to Philip's daughters, were given prophecy, by the same Spirit; the foretelling of things to come; which came to pass according to the prediction: (See 1 Cor. xii. 8, 10.) So that that which was the most eminent gift of the Spirit under the Old Testament, the foretelling of things to come, was, under the New Testament, quite outshone by other gifts, and was bestowed upon those that were of less note in the church. It should seem as if Agabus came on purpose to Cesarea to meet Paul with this prophetic intelligence.

3. He foretold Paul's bonds at Jerusalem, 1. By a sign, as the prophets of old did, Isaiah, chap. xx. 3. Jeremiah, chap. xiii. 1. xxvii. 2. Ezekiel, chap. iv. 1. xii. 3. and many others. Agabus took Paul's girdle, when he laid it by, or, perhaps, took it from about him, and, with it, bound first his own hands, and then his own feet, or, perhaps, bound his hands and feet together; this was designed both to confirm the prophecy, it was as sure to be done, as if it were done already, and to affect those about him with it, because that which we see usually makes a greater impression upon us, than that which we only hear of. 2. By an explication of the sign, Thus saith the holy Ghost, the Spirit of prophecy, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and, as they dealt with his Master (Matt. xx. 18, 19.) shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles, as the Jews in other places had all along endeavoured to do, by accusing him to the Roman governors. Paul had this express warning given him of his troubles, that he might prepare for them, and when they came they might be no surprize or terror to him; and the general notice given us, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God, should be of the same use to us.

Thirdly, The great importunity which his friends used with him to dissuade him from going forward to Jerusalem, ver. 12. Not only they of that place, but we that were of Paul's company, and among the rest Luke himself, who had heard this often before, and seen Paul's resolution notwithstanding, besought him, with tears, that he would not go up to Jerusalem, but steer his course some other way.

Now, 1. Here appeared a commendable affection to Paul, and a value for him, upon the account of his great usefulness in the church. Good men that are very active, sometimes need to be dissuaded from over-working themselves; and good men that are very bold, need to be dissuaded from exposing themselves too far. The Lord is for the body, and so must we be.

2. Yet there was a mixture of infirmity, especially in those of Paul's company, who knew he undertook this journey by divine direction, and had seen with what resolution he had before broken through the like opposition; but we see in them the infirmity incident to us all; when we see troubles at a distance, and have only a general notice of it, we can make light of it; but when it comes near, we begin to shrink, and draw back: Now it toucheth thee, thou art troubled, Job iv. 5.

Fourthly, The holy bravery and intrepidity with which Paul persisted in his resolution, ver. 13.

1. He reproves them for dissuading him; here is a quarrel of love on both sides, and very sincere and strong affections clashing with each other; they love him dearly, and therefore oppose his resolution; he loves them dearly, and therefore chides them for opposing it: What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? They were an offence to him, as Peter was to Christ, when, in a like case, he said, Master, spare thyself. Their weeping about him brake his heart, i. e. 1. It was a temptation to him, it shocked him, it began to weaken and slacken his resolution, and made him entertain thoughts of tacking about; I know I am appointed to suffering, and you ought to animate and encourage me, and to say that which will strengthen my heart; but you, with your tears, break my heart, and discourage me: What do you mean to do thus? Has not our Master bid us take up our cross? and would you have me to balk mine? 2. It was a trouble to him, that they should so earnestly press him to that, in which he could not gratify them, without wronging his conscience: Paul was of a very tender spirit, as he was much in tears himself, so he had a compassionate regard to the tears of his friends, they made a great impression upon him, and would bring him almost to yield to any thing: But now it breaks his heart, when he is under a necessity of denying the request of his weeping friends: It was an unkind kindness, a cruel pity, thus to torment him with their dissuasions, and to add affliction to his grief. When our friends are called out to sufferings, we should shew our love, rather by comforting them, than by sorrowing for them. But observe, These Christians at Cesarea, if they could have foreseen the particulars of that event, the general notice of which they received with so much heaviness, they would have been better reconciled to it for their own sakes; for when Paul was made a prisoner at Jerusalem, he was presently sent to Cesarea, the very place where he now was, chap. xxiii. 33. and there he continued at least two years, chap. xxiv. 27. look what more, and he was a prisoner at large, as appears,

pears, *chap. xxiv. 23.* where orders were given, that he *should have liberty* to go among his friends, and his friends to *come to him*; so that the church at Cefarea had much more of Paul's company and help when he was imprisoned, than they could have had if he had been at liberty. That which we oppose, as thinking it to make much *against us*, may be *over-ruled* by the providence of God to work for us, which is a reason why we should follow providence, and not fear it.

2. He repeats his resolution to go forward notwithstanding. *What mean ye to weep thus? I am ready to suffer whatever is appointed me.* I am fully determined to go whatever comes of it, and therefore it is to no purpose for you to oppose it. I am willing to suffer, and therefore why are you unwilling that I should suffer? Am not I nearest myself, and fittest to judge for myself? If the trouble found me unready it would be a trouble indeed, and you might well weep at the thoughts of it: But blessed be God it doth not. It is very welcome to me, and therefore should not be such a terror to you. For my part, *I am ready, ἑτοίμους ἔχω, I have myself in a readiness,* as soldiers for an engagement. 1. I expect trouble, I count upon it, it will be no surprize to me. I was told at first *what great things I must suffer*, *chap. ix. 16.* 2. I am prepared for it, by a clear conscience, a firm confidence in God, a holy contempt of the world and the body, a lively faith in Christ, and a joyful hope of eternal life. 3. I can *bid it welcome* as we do a friend that we look for, and have made preparation for. I can, through grace, not only bear it but rejoice in it. Now,

1. See how far his resolution extends; we are told that I must be bound at Jerusalem, and you would have me keep away for fear of that. I tell you, *I am ready not only to be bound*, but if the will of God be so, to *die at Jerusalem*; not only to lose my liberty, but to lose my life. It is our wisdom to think of the worst that may befall us, and to prepare accordingly, that we may *stand complete in all the will of God*.

2. See what it is that carries him out thus, that makes him willing to suffer and die, it is *for the name of the Lord Jesus*. All that a man has will he give for his life; but life itself will Paul give for the service and honour of the name of Christ.

Fifthly, The patient acquiescence of his friends in his resolution, *ver. 14.*

1. They submitted to the wisdom of a good man; they had carried the matter as far as they could with decency; but *when he would not be persuaded, we ceased* our importunity. Paul knows best his own mind, and what he has to do, and it becomes us to leave it to himself, and not to censure him for what he doth, or to say he is rash, and wilful, and humourfome, and has a spirit of contradiction, as some people are apt to judge of those that will not do just as they would have them do. No doubt Paul has a good reason for his resolution, though he sees cause to keep it to himself, and God has gracious ends to serve in confirming him in it. It is good manners not to over-press those in their own affairs that *will not be persuaded*.

2. They submitted to the will of a good God; *we ceased*, saying, *the will of the Lord be done*. They did not resolve his resolve into his wilfulness, but into his willingness to suffer, and *God's will* that he should. *Father, in heaven, thy will be done*; as it is a rule to our prayers and to our practice, so it is to our patience. This may refer, 1. To Paul's present stiffness; he is inflexible, and un-persuadable, and in this they see *the will of the Lord done*. It is he that has wrought this fixed resolution in him, and therefore we acquiesce in it. Note, In the turning of the hearts of our friends or ministers, this way or that way, and it may be quite another way than we could wish, we should eye the hand of God, and submit to that. 2. To his *approaching sufferings*; if there be no remedy, but Paul will run himself into bonds, *the will of the Lord Jesus be done*. We have done all that we could do on our parts to prevent it, and now we leave it to God, we leave it to Christ, to whom the Father has *committed all judgment*, and therefore we do, not as we will, but as he will. Note, When we see trouble coming, and particularly that of our ministers being silenced or removed from us, it becomes us to say, *the will of the Lord be done*. God is wise and knows how to make all work for good, and therefore *welcome his holy will*. Not only, the will of the Lord must be done, and there is no remedy; but *let the will of the Lord be done*, for his will is his wisdom, and he doth all *according to the counsel* of it; let him therefore do with us and ours as seemeth good in his eyes. When a trouble is come, this must allay our griefs, that the will of the Lord is done; when we see it coming, this must silence our fears, that the will of the Lord shall be done, to which we must say, *amen*, let it be done.

15. And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Cefarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought a-

mong the Gentiles by his ministry. 20. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law. 21. And they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. 22. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. 23. Do therefore this that we say to thee: we have four men which have a vow on them; 24. Them take, and purify thy self with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing, but that thou thy self also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. 25. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded, that they observe no such things, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. 26. Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

In these verses we have,

First, Paul's journey to Jerusalem from Cefarea, and the company that went along with him.

1. They *took up their carriages*, their bag and baggage, and, as it should seem, like poor travellers or soldiers, were their own porters; so little had they of change of raiment. *Omnia mea mecum porto*. Some think they had with them the money that was collected in the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, for the poor saints at Jerusalem. If they could have persuaded Paul to go some other way, they would gladly have gone along with him, but if notwithstanding their dissuasive he will go to Jerusalem, they do not say, let him go himself then, but as Thomas, in a like case, when Christ would go into danger at Jerusalem, *let us go and die with him*, John xi. 16. Their resolution to cleave to Paul, was like that of Ittai to cleave to David, 2 Sam. xv. 21. *In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, there also will thy servant be*. Thus Paul's boldness emboldened them.

2. Certain of the disciples of Cefarea went along with them. Whether they designed to go however, and took this opportunity of going with so much good company, or whether they went on purpose to see if they could do Paul any service, and if possible prevent his trouble, or at least minister to him in it, doth not appear. The less while Paul is likely to enjoy his liberty, the more industrious they are to improve every opportunity of conversation with him. Elisha kept close to Elijah, when he knew the time was at hand that he should be taken up.

3. They brought with them an honest old gentleman that had a house of his own at Jerusalem, in which he would gladly entertain Paul and his company, one Mnason of Cyprus, *ver. 16. with whom we should lodge*; such a great concourse of people there was to the feast, that it was a hard matter to get lodgings; the publick houses would be taken up by those of the better sort; and it was looked upon as a scandalous thing for those that had private houses to hire their rooms out at those times, but they must freely accommodate strangers with them. Every one then would chuse his friends to be his guests, and Mnason took Paul and his company to be his lodgers; though he had heard what trouble Paul was likely to come into, which might bring those that entertained him, into trouble too, yet he shall be welcome to him whatever comes of it. This Mnason is called an *old disciple*; a disciple *from the beginning*; some think, one of the seventy disciples of Christ, or one of the first converts after the pouring out of the Spirit; or one of the first that was converted by the preaching of the gospel in Cyprus, *chap. xiii. 4.* However it was, it seems, he had been long a Christian, and was now in years. Note, It is an honourable thing to be an *old disciple* of Jesus Christ, to have been enabled by the grace of God to continue long in a course of duty, steadfast in the faith, and growing more and more prudent and experienced to a good old-age. And with these old disciples one would chuse to lodge; for the *multitude of their years shall teach wisdom*.

Secondly, Paul's welcome at Jerusalem.

1. Many of the brethren there *received him gladly*, *ver. 17.* As soon as they had notice that he was come to town, they went to his lodgings at Mnason's house, and congratulated his safe arrival, and told him, they were glad to see him, and invited him to their houses; and counted it an honour to be known to one that was such an eminent servant of Christ. Stresa observes, that the word here used concerning the welcome they give to the apostles, *ἀποδέχονται*, is used concerning the welcome of the apostles doctrine, Acts ii. 41. They *gladly received his word*. We think it we had Paul

among us, we would gladly receive him ; but it is a question whether we would or no, if having his doctrine, we do not gladly receive that.

2. They made a visit to James and the elders of the church, at a church-meeting, *ver. 18.* *The day following Paul went in unto James,* and took us with him that were his companions, to introduce us into acquaintance with the church at Jerusalem. It should seem that James was now the only apostle that was resident at Jerusalem ; the rest had dispersed themselves to preach the gospel in other places : But still they forecasted to have an apostle at Jerusalem, perhaps, sometimes one, and sometimes another, because there was a great resort thither from all parts. James was now *upon the spot,* and *all the elders or presbyters,* that were the ordinary pastors of the church both to preach and govern, were present. Paul saluted them all, payed his respects to them, enquired of their welfare, and *gave them the right hand of fellowship.* He *saluted them,* i. e. he wished them all health and happiness, and prayed to God to bless them. The proper signification of salutation, is wishing salvation to you ; *salve,* or *salus tibi sit :* like, *peace be unto you.* And such mutual salutations, or goodwishes, very well become Christians in token of their love to each other, and joint regard to God.

Thirdly, The account they had from him of his ministry among the Gentiles, and their satisfaction in it.

1. He gave them a narrative of the success of the gospel in those countries where he had been employed, knowing it would be very acceptable to them, to hear of the enlarging of Christ's kingdom. He declared particularly *what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry,* *ver. 19.* Observe how modestly he speaks, not *what things he had wrought,* he was but the instrument, but *what God had wrought by his ministry.* It was not I, but the grace of God which was with me. He *planted and watered,* but God *gave the increase.* He declared it particularly, that the grace of God might appear the more illustrious in the circumstances of his success. Thus David will tell others what *God has done for his soul.* Psal. lxxvi. 16. as Paul here what God had done *by his hand,* and both, that their friends might help them to be thankful.

2. Hence they took occasion to give praise to God, *ver. 20.* *When they heard it, they glorified the Lord.* Paul ascribed it all to God, and to God they gave the praise of it. They did not break out into high encomiums of Paul, but leave it to his Master to say to him, *well done, good and faithful servant ;* but they gave glory to the grace of God which was extended to the Gentiles. Note, The conversion of sinners ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, as it is of the angels. God had honoured Paul more than any of them, in making his usefulness more extensive, yet they do not envy him, nor are they jealous of his growing reputation, but, on the contrary, *glorified the Lord.* And they could not do more to encourage Paul to go on cheerfully in his work, than to glorify God for his success in it ; for if God be praised, Paul is pleased.

Fifthly, The request of James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem to Paul, or their advice rather, that he would gratify the believing Jews, by shewing some compliance with the ceremonial law, and appearing publickly in the temple to offer sacrifice ; which was not a thing in itself sinful ; for the ceremonial law, though it was by no means to be imposed upon the Gentile converts, as the false teachers would have it, and thereby endeavoured to subvert the gospel, yet it was not become unlawful as yet to those that had been bred up in the observation of it, but were far from expecting justification by it. It was *dead,* but not *buried ; dead,* but not yet *deadly.* And being not sinful they thought it was a piece of prudence in Paul to conform thus far.

Observe the counsel they give to Paul herein, not as having authority over him, but an affection for him.

1. They desired him to take notice of the great numbers there were of Jewish converts ; *thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are which believe.* They call him brother, for they looked upon him as a joint-commissioner with them in gospel-work, though they were of the circumcision, and he the apostle of the Gentiles, though they were conformists, and he a nonconformist ; yet they were brethren, and owned the relation. Thou hast been in some of our assemblies, and seest how numerous they are ; *how many myriads of Jews believed.* The word signifies not thousands, but *ten thousands.* Even among the Jews that were most prejudiced against the gospel, yet there were great multitudes that received it ; for the grace of God can break down the strongest holds of Satan. The number of the names at first, was but one hundred and twenty, yet now *many thousands :* Let none therefore despise the day of small things, for though the beginning be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase. Hereby it appeared that God had not quite *cast away his people* the Jews, for among them there was *a remnant,* an *election* that obtained, see *Rom. xi. 1, 5, 7.* *many thousands that believed.* And this account they could give to Paul of the success of the gospel among the Jews, no doubt was as grateful to Paul, as the account he gave them of the conversion of the Gentiles was to them ; for his heart's desire and prayer to God for the Jews, was, *that they might be saved.*

2. They inform him of a prevailing infirmity these believing Jews laboured under, which they could not yet be cured of. *They are all zealous of the law.* They believed in Christ as the true Messiah, they rest upon his righteousness, and submit to his government ; but they know the law of Moses was of God, they have found spiritual benefit in their attendance on the institutions of it, and therefore they can by no means think of parting with it, nor of growing cold to it ; and, perhaps, urged Christ's being *made under the law,* and observing it, which was designed to be our *deliverance* from the law, as a reason for their continuance under it. This was a great weakness and mistake, to be so fond of the shadows when the substance was come ; to keep their necks under a *yoke of bondage,* when Christ was come to make them free. But see, 1. The power of education, and long usage, and especially of a *ceremonial law.* 2. The charitable allowance that must be made in consideration of these. These Jews that believed were not therefore disowned and rejected as no Christians because they were *for the law,* nay, were zealous for it, while it was only in their own practice, and they did not impose it upon others. Their being *zealous of the law,* was capable of a good construction, which charity would put upon it ; and it was capable of a good excuse, considering what they were brought up in, and who they lived among.

3. They give him to understand how these Jews who were so zealous of the law, were ill-affected to him, *ver. 22.* Paul himself, though as faithful a servant as any Christ ever had, yet could not get the good word of all that belonged to Christ's family. *They are informed of thee* (and from their opinion of thee accordingly) that thou not only dost not teach the Gentiles to observe the law, as some would have had thee, we have prevailed with them to drop that, but *dost teach all the Jews which are dispersed among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children, nor to walk after the customs* of our nation, which were of divine appointment, so far as they might be observed even among the Gentiles, at a distance from the temple ; not to observe the fasts and feasts of the church, not to wear their phylacteries, or abstain from unclean meats. Now, 1. It was true that Paul preached the abrogation of the law of Moses, and that it was impossible to be justified by it, and therefore we are not bound up any longer to the observation of it. But, 2. It was false, that he taught them to *forsake Moses ;* for the religion he preached tended not to *destroy the law,* but to *fulfil* it. He preached Christ, the *end of the law* for righteousness, and *repentance* and *faith,* in the exercise of which we are to make great use of the law. The Jews among the Gentiles, whom Paul taught, were so far from *forsaking Moses,* that they never understood him better, nor ever embraced him so heartily as now when they were taught to make use of him as a *school-master to bring them to Christ.* But even the *believing Jews* having got this notion of Paul, that he was an enemy to Moses, and, perhaps, giving too much regard to the *unbelieving Jews* too, were much exasperated against him. Their ministers, the *elders here present,* loved and honoured him, and approved of what he did, and called him brother, but the people could hardly be got to entertain a favourable thought of him ; for it is certain, the least judicious, are the most censorious ; the weak-headed, are the hot-headed. They could not distinguish upon Paul's doctrine as they ought to have done, and therefore condemned it in the gross, through ignorance.

4. They therefore desire Paul that he would by some publick act, now he was come to Jerusalem, make it to appear that the charge against him was false, and that he did not teach people to forsake Moses, and to break the customs of the Jewish church, for he himself retained the use of them.

1. They conclude that something of this kind must be done. *What is it therefore ?* What must be done ? *The multitude will hear that thou art come to town ;* this is an inconvenience that attends men of fame, that their coming and going is taken notice of more than other peoples ; and will be *talked of,* by some for *good-will,* and by others for *ill-will.* When they hear thou art come, *they must needs come together,* i. e. they will expect that we call them together, to advise with them, whether we should admit thee to preach among us as a brother, or no ; or, they will come together of themselves expecting to hear thee. Now something must be done to satisfy them that Paul doth not teach people to *forsake Moses,* and they think it necessary, 1. For Paul's sake, that his reputation may be cleared, and that so good a man may not lie under any blemish, nor so useful a man labour under any disadvantage, which may obstruct his usefulness. 2. For the peoples sake, that they may not continue prejudiced against so good a man, nor lose the benefit of his ministry, by those prejudices. 3. For *their own* sake, that since they knew it was their duty to own Paul, their doing it might not be turned to their reproach among those that were under their charge.

2. They produce a fair opportunity which Paul might take to clear himself ; *do this that we say unto thee,* take our advice in this case. *We have four men,* Jews which believe, of our own churches, and *they have a vow on them,* a vow of nazariteship, for a certain time ; their time is now expired, *ver. 23.* and they are to offer their offering according to the law, when they *shave the head of their separation, a he-lamb for a burnt offering,* an *ew-lamb* for a *sin-offering,* and a *ram* for a *peace-offering,* with other offerings, appur-

appurtenant to them, *Numb. vi. 13, 20.* many used to do this together, when their vow expired about the same time, either for the greater expedition, or the greater solemnity. Now Paul having so far of late complied with the law as to take upon the vow of a Nazarite, and to signify the expiration of it by *shaving his head* at Cenchrea, *chap. xviii. 18.* according to the custom of those who lived at a distance from the temple, they desire him but to go a little further, and to join with these four in offering the sacrifices of a Nazarite; *purify thy self with them* according to the law; and be willing not only to take that trouble, but to *be at charges with them*, in buying sacrifices for this solemn occasion, and to join with them in the sacrifice. And this they think will effectually stop the mouth of calumny, and every one will be convinced that the report was false, that Paul was not the man he was represented to be, did not teach the Jews to forsake Moses, but that he himself, being originally a Jew walked orderly, and kept the law; and, then all would be well.

5. They enter a protestation, that this shall be no infringement at all of the decree lately made in favour of the Gentile converts, nor do they intend by this, in the least to derogate from the liberty allowed them, *ver. 25.* *As touching the Gentiles which believe; we have written and concluded,* and resolve to abide by it *that they observe no such thing,* we would not have them to be bound up by the ceremonial law by no means, but only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; but let not them be tied to the Jewish sacrifices or purifications, or any of their rites and ceremonies. They knew how jealous Paul was for the preserving of the liberty of the converted Gentiles, and therefore expressly covenant to abide by that. Thus far is their proposal.

Sixthly, Here is Paul's compliance with it. He was willing to gratify them in this matter. Though he would not be persuaded not to go to Jerusalem, yet when he was there, he was persuaded to *do as they there did*, *ver. 26.* Then Paul took the men, as they advised, and the very next day, purifying himself with them, and not with multitude or tumult, as he himself pleads, *chap. xxiv. 18.* he entered into the temple as other devout Jews that came upon such errands did, to signify the accomplishment of the day of purification, to the priests; desiring the priest would appoint a time when the offering should be offered for every one of them, one for each. Ainsworth on *Numb. vi. 18.* quotes out of Maimonides a passage which gives some light to this; *if a man say, upon me be half the oblations of a Nazarite, or upon me be half the shaving of a Nazarite, then he brings half the offerings by what Nazarite he will, and that Nazarite pays his offering out of that which is his;* so Paul did here; he contributed what he vowed to the offerings of these Nazarites; and, some think, bound himself to the law of the Nazaritethip, and to an attendance at the temple with fastings and prayers for seven days, not designing that the offering should be offered till then; which was that he signified to the priest.

Now it has been questioned, whether James and the elders did well to give Paul this advice, and whether he did well to take it.

1. Some have blamed this occasional conformity of Paul's as indulging the Jews too much in their adherence to the ceremonial law, and a discouragement to those who stood fast in the liberty where-with Christ had made them free. Was it not enough for James and the elders of Jerusalem to connive at this mistake in the Jewish converts themselves, but must they wheedle Paul to countenance them in it? Had it not been better when they had told Paul how zealous the believing Jews were for the law, if they had desired him whom God had endued with such excellent gifts, to take pains with their people, to convince them of their error, and to shew them that they were made free from the law by their marriage to Christ? *Rom. vii. 4.* And to urge him to encourage them in it by his example, seems to have more in it of fleshly wisdom than of the grace of God. Surely Paul knew what he had to do better than they could teach him. But,

2. Others think the advice was prudent and good, and Paul's following it was justifiable enough as the case stood. It was Paul's avowed principle, *To the Jews, became I as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews,* *1 Cor. ix. 20.* He had circumcised Timothy, to please the Jews; though he would not constantly observe the ceremonial law, yet to gain an opportunity of doing good, and to shew how far he could comply, he would occasionally go to the temple and join in the sacrifices there. Those that are weak in the faith are to be born with, when those that undermine the faith must be opposed. It is true, this compliance of Paul's sped ill to him, for this very thing by which he hoped to pacify the Jews, did but provoke them, and bring him into trouble, yet that is not a sufficient ground to go upon, in condemning it; Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it, but, perhaps, the wise God over-ruled both their advice and Paul's compliance with it, to serve a better purpose than was intended; for we have reason to think, that when the believing Jews who had endeavoured by their zeal for the law to recommend themselves to the good opinion of those who believed not, saw how barbarously they used Paul, who endeavoured to oblige them, they were by this more alienated from the ceremonial-law, than they could have been by the most argumentative, or affecting discourses.

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They saw it was in vain to think of pleasing men that would be pleased with nothing else but the rooting out of Christianity. Integrity and uprightness will be more likely to preserve us than sneaking compliances. And when we consider what a great trouble it must needs be to James and the presbyters in the reflexion upon it, that they had by their advice brought Paul into trouble, it should be a warning to us not to press men to oblige us by doing any thing contrary to their own mind.

27. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, 28. Crying out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and farther, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. 29. (For they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. 31. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32. Who immediately took soldiers, and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. 33. Then the chief captain came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. 34. And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. 35. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was born of the soldiers, for the violence of the people. 36. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. 37. And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? 38. Art not thou that Egyptian which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? 39. But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. 40. And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckened with the hand unto the people: and when there was made a great silence, he speak unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

We have here Paul brought into a captivity which we are not likely to see the end of; for after this he is either hurried from one bar to another, or lies neglected first in one prison, and then in another, and can neither be tried nor bailed. When we see the beginning of a trouble, we know not either how long it will last, or how it will issue.

First, We have here Paul seized, and laid hold on.

1. He was seized in the temple, when he was there attending the days of his purifying, and the solemn services of those days, *ver. 27.* Formerly he had been well known in the temple, but now he had been so long in his travels abroad, that he was become a stranger there; so that it was not till the seven days were almost ended, that he was taken notice of by those that had an evil eye towards him. In the temple where he should have been protected as in a sanctuary, he was most violently set upon by those who did what they could to have mingled his blood with his sacrifices. In the temple where he should have been welcomed as one of the greatest ornaments of it that ever had been there since the Lord of the temple left it. The temple which they themselves pretended such a mighty zeal for, yet did they themselves thus profane. This is the church polluted by none more than by popish persecutors, under the colour of the church's name and interest.

2. The informers against him were the Jews of Asia, not those of Jerusalem; the Jews of the dispersion, who knew him best, and who were most exasperated against him. Those who seldom came up to worship at the temple in Jerusalem themselves, but contentedly lived at a distance from it, in pursuit of their private advantages, yet appeared most jealous for the temple, as if thereby they would atone for their habitual neglect of it.

3. The method they took was to raise the mob, and to incense them against him. They did not go to the high priest, or the magistrates of the city with their charge, probably because they expected not to receive countenance from them, but they stirred up all the people, who were at this time more than ever disposed to any thing that was tumultuous and seditious, riotous, and routous.

Those are fittest to be employed against Christ and Christianity that are governed least by reason, and most by passion; therefore Paul described the Jewish persecutors to be not only wicked but absurd, unreasonable men.

4. The arguments wherewith they exasperated the people against him were popular, but very false and unjust. They cried out, *men of Israel, help*; If ye are indeed *men of Israel*, true born Jews, that have a concern for your church, and your country, now is your time to shew it, by helping to seize an enemy to both. Thus they cried after him as after a thief, Job xxx. 5. or after a mad dog. Note, The enemies of Christianity since they could never prove it to be an *ill thing*, have been alway very industrious, right or wrong, to put it into an *ill name*, and so run it down by outrage, and outcry. It had become *men of Israel* to help Paul, who preached up him who was so much the *glory of his people Israel*, yet here the popular fury will not allow them to be *men of Israel*, unless they will *help against him*. This was like, *stop thief*, or Athaliah's cry, *treason, treason*; what is wanting in *right* is made up in *noise*.

They charge upon him both ill doctrine, and ill practice, and both against the *Mosaick ritual*.

1. They charge upon him *ill doctrine*; not only that he holds corrupt opinions himself, but that he *vents* and *publishes* them, though not here at Jerusalem, yet in other places, nay, *in all places*, he teacheth *all men, every where*; so artfully is the crime aggravated, as if because he was an itinerant, he was an ubiquitaire; he spreads to the utmost of his power, certain damnable and heretical positions, 1. *Against the people of the Jews*; he had taught that Jews and Gentiles stand on the same level before God, and *neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision*; nay, he had taught against the *unbelieving Jews*, that they were *rejected*, and therefore had *separated* from them and there synagogues, and this is interpreted to be speaking against the whole nation, as if no doubt but *they were the people, and wisdom must die with them*, Job xii. 1. whereas God, though he had cast them off, yet had not *cast away his people*, Rom. xi. 1. They were *lo-ammi, not a people*, Hos. i. 9. and yet pretend to be the only people. Those commonly seem most jealous for the church's name that belong to it in name only. 2. *Against the law*. His teaching men to believe the gospel as the *end of the law*, and the *perfection* of it was interpreted his preaching against the law; whereas it was so far from *making void the law*, that it established it, Rom. iii. 31. 3. *Against this place*, the temple; because he taught men to *pray every where*, he was reproached as an enemy to the temple, and, perhaps, because he sometimes mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple, and of the Jewish nation, which his Master had foretold. Paul had himself been active in persecuting Stephen, and putting him to death for words spoken *against his holy place*, and now the same thing is laid to his charge. He that was then made use of as the *tool*, is now set up as the *butt* of Jewish rage and malice.

2. They charge upon him ill practices. To confirm their charge against him, as teaching people against *this holy place*, they charge it upon him, that he had himself *polluted it*, and by an overt-act shewed his contempt of it, and a design to make it common. He *has brought Gentiles also into the temple*; into the inner court of the temple, which none that were uncircumcised were admitted under any pretence to come into; there was written upon the wall that inclosed this inner court, in Greek and Latin, *it is a capital crime for strangers to enter*, Joseph. *Antiq. lib. xv. chap. 14*. Paul was himself a Jew, and had right to enter into the court of the Jews. And they seeing some with him there that joined with him in his devotions, concluded that Trophimus an Ephesian who was a Gentile, was one of them; why? Did they see him there? truly no, but they had seen him with Paul in the streets of the city, which was no crime at all, and therefore they affirm that he was with Paul in the inner court of the temple, which was a heinous crime. They had *seen him with him in the city*, and therefore they supposed that Paul had brought him with him into the temple, which was utterly false. See here, 1. That innocency is no fence against calumny and false accusation: It is no new thing for those that mean honestly, and act regularly, to have things laid to their charge which they know not, nor ever thought of. 2. That *evil men dig up mischief*, and go far to see proofs of their false accusations as they did here, who because they saw a Gentile with Paul in the city, will from thence infer, that he was with him in the temple: This was a strained innuendo indeed, yet by such unjust and groundless suggestions have wicked men thought to justify themselves in the most barbarous outrages committed upon the *excellent ones of the earth*. 3. It is common for malicious people to improve that against those that are wise and good, with which they thought to have obliged them, and ingratiated themselves with them. Paul thought to recommend himself to their good opinion by *going into the temple*, and from thence they take an occasion to accule him. If he had kept further off them, he had not been so maligned by them. This is the genius of ill-nature; *for my love, they are my adversaries*, Psal. cix. 4. lxix. 10.

Secondly, We have here Paul in danger of being pulled in pieces by the rabble; they will not be at the pains to have him before the high priest or the Sanhedrin, that is a roundabout way, the execution shall be of a piece with the prosecution, all unjust

and irregular: They cannot prove the crime upon him, and therefore dare not bring him upon a fair trial; nay, so greedily do they thirst after his blood, that they have not patience to proceed against him by a due course of law, though they were never so sure to gain their point; and therefore as those who neither feared God, nor regarded man, they resolved to knock him on the head presently.

1. All the city was in an uproar, *ver. 30*. The people who though they had little holiness themselves, yet had a mighty veneration for the holy place, when they heard a hue-and-cry from the temple, were up in arms presently, being resolved to stand by that with their lives and fortunes. *All the city was moved* when they were called to from the temple, *men of Israel, help*, with as much violence as if the old complaint were to be revived, *Psal. lxxix. 1. O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled*. Just such a zeal the Jews here shew for *God's temple*, as the Ephesians did for Diana's temple, when Paul was informed against as an enemy to that, *Acts xix. 29. The whole city was full of confusion*. But God doth not reckon himself at all honoured by those whose zeal for him transports them to such irregularities, and who, while they pretend to act for him, act in such a brutish, barbarous manner.

2. They drew Paul out of *the temple* and *shut the door*, between the outer and inner court of the temple, or, perhaps, the *doors of the outer court*. In dragging him furiously out of the temple, 1. They shewed a real detestation of him as one not fit to be suffered in the temple; nor to worship there, nor to be looked upon as a member of the Jewish nation; as if his sacrifice had been an abomination. 2. They pretended a veneration for the temple; like that of good Jehoadah, who would not have Athaliah to be *slain in the house of the Lord*, 1 Kings xi. 15. See how absurd these wicked men were; they condemned Paul for drawing people from the temple, and yet when he himself was very devoutly worshipping in the temple, they drew him out of it. The officers of the temple *shut the doors*, either, 1. Left Paul should find means to get back, and *take hold of the horns of the altar*, and so protect himself by that sanctuary from their rage. Or rather, 2. Left the croud should by running in of more to them be thrust back into the temple, and some outrage should be committed to the profanation of that holy place. They that made no conscience of doing so ill a thing as the murdering of a good man for well-doing, yet would be thought to make conscience of doing it in a holy place, or at a holy time; *not in the temple*, as, *not on the feast-day*.

3. They *went about to kill him*; *ver. 31*. for they fell a *beating him*, *ver. 32*. resolving to beat him to death, by blows without number: A punishment which the Jewish doctors allowed of in some cases, (not at all to the credit of their nation) and called, *the beating of the rebels*. Now was Paul, like a lamb, thrown into a den of lions, and made an easy prey to them, and no doubt he was still of the *same mind*, as when he said, *I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, to die so great a death*.

Thirdly, We have here Paul rescued out of the hands of his Jewish enemies, by a Roman enemy.

1. Tidings were brought of the tumult, and that the mob was up, *to the chief captain of the band*, the governor of the castle, or, whoever he was, the now commander in chief of the Roman forces that were quartered in Jerusalem. Some body that was concerned not for Paul, but for the publick peace and safety, gave this information to the colonel, who had always a jealous and watchful eye upon those tumultuous Jews; and he is the man that must be instrumental to save Paul's life, when never a friend he had was capable of doing him any service.

2. The tribune or chief captain got his forces together with all possible expedition, and went to suppress the mob; *he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them*. Now at the feast, as at other such solemn times, the guards were up, and the militia more within call than at other times, and so he had them near at hand, and he *ran down unto the multitude*; for, at such times delays are dangerous. Sedition must be crushed at first, lest it grow headstrong.

3. The very sight of the Roman general frightened them from beating Paul; for they knew they were doing what they could not justify, and were in danger to be *called in question for this day's uproar*, as the town-clerk told the Ephesians. They were deterred from that by the power of the Romans, from which they ought to have been restrained by the justice of God, and the dread of his wrath. Note, God often makes the earth to help the woman, *Rev. xii. 16*. and those to be a protection to his people, who yet have no affection for his people; only have a compassion for sufferers, and are jealous for the publick peace. The shepherd makes use even of his dogs for the defence of his sheep. It is Strelow's comparison here. See here how these wicked people were frightened away at the very sight of the *chief captain*; For, *the king that sitteth on the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil with his eyes*.

4. The governor takes him into custody; he rescued him, not out of a concern for him, because he thought him innocent, but out of a concern for justice, because he ought not to be put to death without trial; and because he knew not how dangerous the consequence might be to the Roman government, if such tumultuous

tuous proceedings were not timely suppressed; nor what such an outrageous people might do, if once they knew their own strength; he therefore takes Paul out of the hands of the mob, into the hands of the law, *ver. 33. He took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains*; that the people might be satisfied he did not intend to discharge him, but to examine him; for *he demanded* of those that were so eager against him, *who he was, and what he had done*. This violent taking of him out of the hands of the multitude, though there was all the reason in the world for it, yet they laid to the charge of the chief captain as his crime, *chap. xxiv. 7. The chief captain Lyfias came with great violence and took him out of our hands*, which refers to this rescue, as appears by comparing *chap. xxiii. 27, 28.* where the chief captain gives an account of it to Felix.

Fourthly, The provision which the chief captain made, with much ado, to bring Paul to speak for himself; one had almost as good enter into a struggle with the winds and the waves, as with such a mob as was here got together; and yet Paul made a shift to get liberty of speech among them.

1. There was no knowing the sense of the people; for when the chief captain enquired concerning Paul, having, perhaps, never heard of his name before (such strangers were the great ones to the excellent ones of the earth, and affected to be so) some cried one thing, and some another, among the multitude; so that it was impossible for the chief captain to know their mind, when really they knew not either one another's mind, or their own, when every one pretended to give the sense of the whole body. Those that will hearken to the clamours of the multitude, will know nothing for a certainty, no more than from the builders of Babel, when their tongues were confounded.

2. There was no quelling the rage and fury of the people; for when the chief captain commanded that Paul should be carried into the castle, the tower of Antonia, where the Roman soldiers kept garrison, near the temple, the soldiers themselves had much ado to get him safe thither, out of the noise, the people were so violent, *ver. 35. When he came upon the stairs, leading up to the castle, the soldiers were forced to take him up in their arms, and carry him* (which they might easily do, for he was a little man, and his bodily presence weak) to keep him from the people, who would have pulled him limb from limb if they could: When they could not reach him with their cruel hands, they followed him with their sharp arrows, even bitter words; they followed, crying, *Away with him*, *ver. 36.* See how the most excellent persons and things are often run down by a popular clamour! Christ himself was so, with, *Crucify him, crucify him*; though they could not say what evil he had done. Take him out of the land of the living, so the ancients expound it; chase him out of the world.

3. Paul at length begged leave of the chief captain to speak to him, *ver. 37. As he was to be led into the castle, with a great deal of calmness and composedness in himself, and a great deal of mildness and deference to those about him, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee?* Will it be no offence, or construed as a breach of rule, if I give thee some account of myself, since my persecutors can give no account of me? What an humble, modest question was this! Paul knew how to speak to the greatest of men, and had many a time spoken to his betters, yet he humbly begs leave to speak to this commander, and will not speak till he has obtained leave: *May I speak unto thee?*

4. The chief captain tells him what notion he had of him; *Canst thou speak Greek?* I am surprized to hear thee speak a learned language; for, *Art not thou that Egyptian which madest an uproar?* The Jews made the uproar, and then would have it thought that Paul had given them occasion for it, by beginning first; for, probably, some of them whispered this in the ear of the chief captain. See what false mistaken notions of good people, and good ministers, many run away with, and will not be at the pains to have the mistake rectified!

It seems, there had lately been an insurrection, somewhere in that country, headed by an Egyptian, who took on him to be a prophet; Josephus mentions this story, "That an Egyptian raised a seditious party, promised to shew them the fall of the walls of Jerusalem from the mount of Olives, and that they should enter the city upon the ruins." The captain here saith, *that he led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers, desperadoes, banditti, rapparees, cut-throats*: What a degeneracy was there in the Jewish nation, when there were found there so many that had such a character, and could be drawn into such an attempt upon the publick peace! But Josephus saith, "That Felix, the Roman president, went out against them, killed four hundred, and took two hundred prisoners, and the rest were dispersed," *Antiq. xx. 6. De bello Jud. ii. 12.* And Eusebius speaks of it, *Hist. ii. 20.* It happened in the thirteenth year of Claudius, a little before those days, about three years ago. The ringleader of this rebellion, it seems, had made his escape, and the chief captain concluded, that one that lay under so great an odium as Paul seemed to lie under, and against whom there was so great an outcry, could not be a criminal of less figure than this Egyptian. See how good men are exposed to ill-will by mistake!

5. Paul rectifies his mistake concerning him, by informing him particularly what he was; not such a vagabond, a scoundrel, a

rake, as that Egyptian, who could give no good account of himself; no; *I am a man which am a Jew*, originally, and no Egyptian; a Jew, both by nation and religion; *I am of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia*, of honest parents, and a liberal education (Tarsus was an university) and, besides that, *a citizen of no mean city*, whether he means Tarsus, or Rome, is not certain; they were neither of them mean cities, and he was a freeman of both. Though the chief captain had put him under such an invidious suspicion, that he was that Egyptian, he kept his temper, did not break out into any passionate exclamations against the times he lived in, or the men he had to do with, did not render railing for railing, but mildly denied the charge, and owned what he was.

6. He humbly desired a permission from the chief captain, whose prisoner he now was, to speak to the people; he doth not demand it as a debt, though he might have done it, but sues for it as a favour, which he will be thankful for; *I beseech thee, suffer me to speak to the people.* The chief captain rescued him with no other design but to give him a fair hearing, now, to shew that his cause needs no art to give it a plausible colour, he desires he may have leave immediately to defend himself; for it needed no more than to be set in a true light; nor did he depend only upon the goodness of his cause, but upon the goodness and fidelity of his patron, and that promise of his to all his advocates, that it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak.

Lastly, He obtained leave to plead for his own cause, for he needed not to have counsel assigned him, when the Spirit of the Father was ready to dictate to him, *Matt. x. 20. The chief captain gave him license*, *ver. 40.* so that now he could speak with a good grace, and with the more courage; he had, *I will not say, that favour, but that justice done him by the chief captain*, which he could not obtain from his countrymen the Jews, for they would not hear him, but the captain would, though it were but to satisfy his curiosity.

This license being obtained,

1. The people were attentive to hear; Paul stood on the stairs, which gave a little man, like Zaccheus, some advantage, and, consequently, some boldness in delivering himself; a fair pulpit it was, and yet better than none; it served the purpose, though it was not, like Ezra's pulpit of wood, made for the purpose; there he beckened with the hand unto the people, made signs to them to be quiet, and have a little patience, for he had something to say to them; and so far he gained his point, that every one cried hush to his neighbour, and there was made a profound silence; probably, the chief captain also intimated his charge to all manner of people to keep silence; if the people were not required to give audience, it was to no purpose at all that Paul was allowed to speak: When the cause of Christ and his gospel is to be pleaded, there ought to be a great silence, that we may give the more earnest heed; and all little enough.

2. Paul addressed himself to speak, well assured that he was serving the interest of Christ's kingdom, as truly and effectually, as if he had been preaching in the synagogue; he spoke unto them in the Hebrew tongue, i. e. in their own vulgar tongue, which was the language of their country, to which he hereby owned not only an abiding relation, but an abiding respect.

C H A P. XXII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had Paul bound, according to Agabus's prophecy of the hard usage he should receive from the Jews at Jerusalem, yet we had his tongue set at liberty, by the permission the chief captain gave him to speak for himself; and so intent he is upon using that liberty of speech which was allowed him, to the honour of Christ, and the service of his interest, that he forgets the bonds he is in, makes no mention of them, but speaks of the great things Christ had done for him, with as much ease and cheerfulness, as if nothing had been done to ruffle him, or put him into disorder. We have here, 1. His address to the people, and their attention to it, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. The account he gives of himself: (1.) What a bigotted Jew he had been in the beginning of his time, *ver. 3,—5.* (2.) How he was miraculously converted and brought over to the faith of Christ, *ver. 6,—11.* (3.) How he was confirmed and baptized by the ministry of Ananias, *ver. 12,—16.* (4.) How he was afterwards called, by an immediate warrant from heaven, to be the apostle of the Gentiles, *ver. 17,—21.* 3. The interruption given him upon this by the rabble, who could not bear to hear any thing said in favour of the Gentiles, and the violent passion they flew into upon it, *ver. 22, 23.* 4. Paul's second rescue out of the hands of the rabble, and the further course which the chief captain took to find out the true reason of this mighty clamour against Paul, *ver. 24, 25.* 5. Paul's pleading his privilege as a Roman citizen, by which he was exempted from the barbarous method of inquisition, *ver. 25,—29.* 6. The chief captain's removing the cause into the high priest's court, and Paul's appearing there, *ver. 30.*

1. MEN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. 2. (And when they

they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence : and he saith)

Paul had, in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, gained a great point, by commanding so profound a silence, after so loud a clamour. Now here observe,

First, With what an admirable composure and presence of mind he addresseth himself to speak ; never was poor man set upon in a more tumultuous manner, nor with more rage and fury ; and yet, in what he said,

1. There appears no fright, but his mind is sedate and composed ! Thus he makes his own words good, *None of these things move me* ; and David's, *Psalms* iii. 6. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.*

2. There appears no passion ; though the suggestions against him were all frivolous and unjust, though it would have vexed any man alive, to be charged with profaning the temple, just then when he was contriving and designing to shew his respects to it, yet he breaks out into no angry expressions, but is *led as a lamb to the slaughter.*

Secondly, What respectful titles he gives, even to those who thus abused him, and how humbly he craves their attention : *Men, brethren, and fathers*, ver. 1. To you, O men, I call, *men*, that should hear reason, and be ruled by it ; *men*, from whom one may expect humanity : You, *brethren* of the common people ; you, *fathers* of the priests : Thus he lets them know that he was one of them, and had not renounced his relation to the Jewish nation, but still had a kindness and concern for it. Note, Though we must not give flattering titles to any, yet we ought to give titles of due respect to all ; and those we would do good to, we should endeavour not to provoke. Though he was got out of their hands, and was taken under the protection of the chief captain, yet he doth not fall foul upon them, with, *Hear now, ye rebels* ; but compliments them with, *Men, brethren, and fathers.*

And observe, he doth not exhibit a charge against them, doth not recriminate, *hear now* what I have to say against you, but, *hear now* what I have to say for myself, *hear ye my defence* ; a just and reasonable request ; for every man that is accused, has a right to answer for himself, and has not justice done him, if his answer be not patiently and impartially heard.

Thirdly, The language he spoke in, which recommended what he said to the auditory ; *he spake in the Hebrew tongue*, i. e. the vulgar language of the Jews ; which, at this time, was not the pure Old Testament Hebrew, but the Syriack, a dialect of the Hebrew, or rather, a corruption of it, as the Italian of the Latin : However,

1. It shewed his continued respect to his countrymen, *the Jews* ; though he had conversed so much *with the Gentiles*, yet he still retained *the Jews* language, and could talk it with ease ; by this it appears he is a Jew, *for his speech betrayeth him.*

2. What he said was the more generally understood, for that was the language every body spoke, and therefore to speak in that language, was indeed to appeal to the people, by which he might have somewhat to insinuate into their affections ; and therefore, *when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue, they kept the more silence.* How can it be thought people should give any attention to that which is spoken to them in a language they do not understand ? The chief captain was surprized to hear him *speak Greek*, chap. xxi. 37. *the Jews* were surprized to hear him *speak Hebrew*, and both therefore think the better of him. But how would they have been surprized, if they had enquired, as they ought to have done, and had found in what variety of tongues the Spirit gave him utterance ? 1 Cor. xiv. 18. *I speak with tongues more than you all.* But the truth is, many wise and good men are therefore slighted, only because they are not known.

3. I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day. 4. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 5. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders : from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. 6. And it came to pass, that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? 8. And I answered, Who art thou, Lord ? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest. 9. And they that were with

me, saw indeed the light, and were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. 10. And I said, What shall I do, Lord ? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. 12. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13. Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard. 16. And now why tarriest thou ? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. 17. And it came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance ; 18. And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem : for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee. 20. And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21. And he said unto me, Depart : for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Paul here gives such an account of himself, as might serve not only to satisfy the chief captain that he was not that Egyptian he took him to be, but the Jews also, that he was not that enemy to their church and nation, to their law and temple, as they took him to be ; and that what he did in preaching Christ, and particularly in preaching him to the Gentiles, he did by a divine commission : He here gives them to understand,

First, What his extraction and education was :

1. That he was one of their own nation, of the stock of Israel, of the seed of Abraham, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, not of any obscure family, or a renegado of some other nation ; no, I am verily a man which am a Jew, *and I said, a Jewish man* : I am a man, and therefore ought not to be treated as a beast ; a man that am a Jew, not a barbarian, I am a sincere friend to your nation ; for I am one of it, and should desire my own nest, if I should unjustly derogate from the honour of your law and your temple.

2. That he was born in a creditable, reputable place, in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, and was by his birth a freeman of that city ; he was not born in servitude, as some of the Jews of the dispersion, it is likely, were ; but he was a gentleman born, and, perhaps, could produce his certificate of his freedom in that ancient and honourable city. This was, indeed, but a small matter to make any boast of, and yet it was needful to be mentioned at this time to those who insolently trampled upon him, as if he were to be ranked with the children of fools, yea, the children of base men, Job xxx. 8.

3. That he had a learned and liberal education ; he was not only a Jew, and a gentleman, but a scholar ; he was brought up in Jerusalem, the principal seat of the Jewish learning, and at the feet of Gamaliel, whom they all knew to be an eminent doctor of the Jewish law, which Paul was designed to be himself a teacher of ; and therefore he could not be ignorant of their law, nor be thought to slight it, because he did not know it ; his parents had brought him very young to this city, designing him for a Pharisee ; and, some think, his being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, intimates, not only that he was one of his pupils, but that he was, above any other, diligent and constant in attending his lectures, observant of him, and obsequious to him, in all he said, as Mary, that sat at Jesus feet, and heard his word.

4. That he was in his early days a very forward and eminent professor of the Jews religion, his studies and learning were all directed that way : So far was he from being principled in his youth with any disaffection to the religious usages of the Jews, that there was not a young man among them that had a greater or more entire veneration for them than he had, was more strict in observing them himself, nor more hot in enforcing them upon others.

(1.) He was an intelligent professor of their religion, and had a clear head ; he minded his business at Gamaliel's feet, and was there taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers :

thers: What departures he had made from the law, were not owing to any confused or mistaken notions of it, for he understood it to a nicety, *καὶ ἀκριβῶς*, according to the most accurate and exact method; he was not trained up in the principles of the latitudinarians, had nothing in him of a Sadducee, but was of that sect that was most studious in the law, kept most close to it, and, to make it more strict than it was, added to it the traditions of the elders, the law of the fathers; the law which was given to them, and which they gave to their children, and so was handed down to us: Paul had as great a value for antiquity, and tradition, and the authority of the church, as any of them had; and there was never a Jew of them all understood his religion better than Paul did, nor could better give an account of it, or a reason for it.

(2.) He was an active professor of their religion, and had a warm heart; *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day*. Many that are very well skilled in the theory of religion, are willing to leave the practice of it to others; but Paul was as much a zealot as a Rabbín; he was zealous against every thing that the law prohibited, and for every thing the law enjoined; and this was *zeal towards God*, because he thought it was for the honour of God, and the service of his interests; and here he compliments his hearers with a candid and charitable opinion of them, *that they were all this day zealous towards God; he bears them record*, Rom. x. 2. *that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*: In hating him, and casting him out, they said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. lxvi. 5. and though this did by no means justify their rage, yet it enabled those that prayed, *Father, forgive them*, to plead, as Christ did, *for they know not what they do*. And when Paul owns *that he had been zealous for God*, in the law of Moses, *as they were this day*, he intimates his hope, *that they might be zealous for God*, in Christ, *as he was this day*.

Secondly, What a fiery, furious persecutor he had been of the Christian religion in the beginning of his time, ver. 4, 5. He mentions this, to make it the more plainly and evidently to appear, that the change which was wrought upon him, when he was converted to the Christian faith, was purely the effect of a divine power; for he was so far from having any previous inclinations to it, or favourable opinions of it, that immediately before that sudden change was wrought in him, he had the utmost antipathy imaginable to Christianity, and was filled with rage against it to the last degree; and, perhaps, he mentions it to justify God in his present trouble; how *unrighteous* soever they were that persecuted him, *God was righteous* who permitted them to do it, for time was when he *was a persecutor*; and he may have a further view in it, *to invite and encourage those people to repent*; for he himself had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and yet obtained mercy.

Let us view Paul's picture of himself when he was a persecutor.

1. He hated Christianity *with a mortal enmity*; *I persecuted this way unto the death*, i. e. those that walked in this way I aimed, if possible, to be the death of: He *breathed out slaughter against them*, Acts ix. 1. *When they were put to death, he gave his voice against them*, Acts xxvi. 10. Nay, he persecuted not only them that walked in this way, but the way itself, Christianity, which was branded as a by-way, a sect, he aimed to *persecute this to the death*, to be the ruin of this religion; he *persecuted it to the death*, i. e. he could have been willing himself to die in his opposition to Christianity, so some understand it; he would contentedly have lost his life, and would have thought it well laid out, in defence of the laws and traditions of the fathers.

2. He did all he could to frighten people from *this way*, and out of it, by binding and delivering into prison both men and women; he filled the jails with Christians: Now he himself *was bound*, he lays a particular stress upon this part of his charge against himself, *that he had bound the Christians*, and carried them to prison; he likewise reflects upon it with a special regret, *that he had imprisoned not only the men, but the women*, the weaker sex, who ought to be treated with particular tenderness and compassion.

3. He was employed by the great Sanhedrin, the high priest, and all the estates of the elders, as an agent for them, in suppressing this new sect; so much had he already signalized himself for his zeal against it! ver. 5. The high priest can witness for him, that he was ready to be employed in any service against the Christians. When they heard that many of the Jews at Damascus had embraced the Christian faith, to deter others from doing the like, they resolved to proceed against them with the utmost severity, and could not think of a fitter person to be employed in that business than Paul, nor more like to go through with it: They *therefore sent him*, and letters by him, to the Jews at Damascus, here called the brethren, because they all descended from one common stock, and were of one family in religion too, ordering them to be assisting to Paul in seizing those among them that had turned Christians, and bringing them up prisoners to Jerusalem, in order to their being punished as deserters from the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and so might either be compelled to retreat, or be put to death for terror to others. Thus did Saul make havock of the church, and was in a fair way, if he had gone on a while, to ruin it, and root it out. Such a one, faith Paul, I was at first,

just such as you now are: I know the heart of a persecutor, and therefore pity you, and pray that you may know the heart of a convert, as God soon made me to do; *And who was I that I could withstand God?*

Thirdly, In what manner he was converted, and made what he now was; it was not from any natural or external causes, he did not change his religion from an affectation of novelty, for he was then as well affected to antiquity as he used to be; nor did it arise from discontent because he was balked in his preferment, for he was now, more than ever, in the way of preferment in the Jewish church; much less could it arise from covetousness, or ambition, or any hope of mending his fortune in the world by turning Christian, for it was to expose himself to all manner of disgrace and trouble; nor had he any conversation with the apostles, or any other Christians, by whose subtilty and sophistry he might be thought to have been wheedled into this change; no, *it was the Lord's doing*, and the circumstances of the doing of it were enough to justify him in the change, to all those who believe there is a supernatural power; and none can condemn him for it, without reflecting upon that divine energy, by which he was herein overruled.

He relates the story of his conversion here very particularly, as we had it before, chap. ix. aiming to shew that it was purely the act of God.

1. He was as fully bent upon persecuting the Christians just before Christ arrested him as ever; he *made his journey, and was come nigh to Damascus*, ver. 6. and had no other thought but to execute the cruel design he was sent upon; he was not conscious of the least compassionate relentings towards the poor Christians, but still represented them to himself as hereticks, schismaticks, and dangerous enemies both to church and state.

2. It was a light from heaven that first startled him, a great light, which *shone suddenly round about him*, and the Jews knew that *God is light*, and his angels, *angels of light*, and that *such a light as this shining at noon*, and therefore exceeding that of the sun, must be from God: Had it shone in upon him into some private room, there might have been a cheat in it, but it shone upon him in the open road, at high noon, and so strongly, *that it struck him to the ground*, ver. 7. and all *that were with him*, chap. xxvi. 14. They could not deny but that *surely the Lord was in this light*.

3. It was a voice from heaven that first began in him awful thoughts of Jesus Christ, whom before he had had nothing but hateful, spiteful thoughts of: The voice called to him by name, to distinguish him from those that journeyed with him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* And when he asked, *Who art thou, Lord?* it was answered, *I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest*, ver. 8. By which it appeared, *that this Jesus of Nazareth*, whom they also were now persecuting, was one *that spake from heaven*, and they knew it was dangerous resisting one that did so, Heb. xii. 2, 5.

4. Left it should be objected, how came this light and voice to work such a change upon him, and not upon those that journeyed with him (though, it is very probable, it had a good effect upon them, and that they thereupon became Christians) he observes, *that his fellow travellers saw indeed the light, and were afraid* they should be consumed *with fire from heaven*, their own consciences, perhaps, now telling them that the way they were in was not good, but like Balaam's, when he was going to curse Israel, and therefore they might expect to *meet an angel with a flaming, glittering sword*; but though the light made them afraid, they heard not the voice of him that spake to Paul, i. e. they did not distinctly hear the words; now *faith comes by hearing*, and therefore that change was now presently wrought upon him *that heard the words*, and heard them directed to himself, which was not wrought upon them who only *saw the light*; and yet it might afterwards be wrought upon them too.

5. He assures them, that when he was thus startled, he referred himself entirely to a divine conduct; he did not hereupon presently cry out, well, I will be a Christian, but, *What shall I do, Lord?* Let the same voice from heaven, that hath stopped me in the wrong way, guide me into the right way, ver. 10. *Lord, tell me what I shall do*, and I will do it: And immediately he had directions *to go to Damascus*, and there he should hear further from him that spake to him; no more needs to be said from heaven, *there it shall be told thee*, by a man like thyself, in the name of him that now speaks to thee, *all things which are appointed for thee to do*. The extraordinary ways of divine revelation, by visions and voices, and the appearance of angels, were designed, both in the Old Testament and in the New, only to introduce and establish the ordinary method by the scriptures, and a standing ministry, and therefore were generally superseded when those were settled. The angel did not preach to Cornelius himself, but bid him send for Peter; so the voice here tells not Paul what he shall do, but bids him go into Damascus, and *there it shall be told him*.

6. As a demonstration of the greatness of that light which fastened upon him, he tells them of the immediate effect it had upon his eye-sight, ver. 11. *I could not see for the glory of that light*; it struck him blind for the present; *Nimirum sensibile ledit sensum*: Condemned sinners are struck blind, as the Sodomites and Egyptians were, by the power of darkness, and it is a lasting blindness,

like that of the unbelieving Jews; but convinced sinners are struck blind, as Paul here was, not by darkness, but by *light*; they are, for the present, brought to be at a loss within themselves, but it is in order to their being enlightened; as the putting of clay upon the eyes of the blind man, was the designed method of his cure. Those that were with Paul had not the *light* so directly darted into their faces, as Paul had into his, and therefore they were not blinded, as he was; yet, considering the issue, who would not rather have chosen his lot, than theirs? They, having their sight, led Paul by the hand into the city. Paul, being a Pharisee, was proud of his spiritual eye-sight: The Pharisees said, *Are we blind also?* John ix. 40. Nay, they were confident, *that they themselves were guides to the blind, and lights to them that were in darkness*, Rom. ii. 19. Now Paul was thus struck with bodily blindness, to make him sensible of his spiritual blindness, and his mistake concerning himself, when he was *alive without the law*, Rom. vii. 9.

Fourthly, How he was confirmed in the change he had made, and further directed what he should do, by Ananias, who lived at Damascus. Observe,

1. The character here given of Ananias; he was not a man that was any way prejudiced against the Jewish nation, or religion, but was himself a *devout man according to the law*; if not a Jew by birth, yet one that had been profelyted to the Jewish religion, and therefore called a *devout man*, and thence advanced further to the faith of Christ, and carried himself so well, that he had a *good report of all the Jews that dwelt at Damascus*; this was the first Christian that Paul had any friendly communication with, and it was not likely that he should instil into him any such notions as they suspected him to have espoused, injurious to the law, or to this holy place.

2. The cure immediately wrought by him upon Paul's eyes; which miracle was to confirm Ananias's mission to Paul, and to ratify all that he should afterwards say to him. He came to him, ver. 13. and, to assure him that he came to him from Christ, the very same who had *torn*, and would *heal* him; had *smitten*, but would *restore* it again, with advantage; he stood by him, and said, *Brother Saul, receive thy sight*. With which word power went along, and the same hour immediately he recovered his sight, and looked up upon him, ready to receive from him the instructions sent by him.

3. The declaration which Ananias makes to him of the favour, the peculiar favour, which the Lord Jesus designed him, above any other.

(1.) In the present manifestation of himself to him, ver. 14. *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee*: This powerful call is the result of a particular choice; his calling God *the God of our fathers*, intimates, that Ananias was himself a Jew by birth, that observed *the law of the fathers*, and lived upon *the promise made unto the fathers*; and he gives a reason why he said *brother Saul*, when he spoke of God, as *the God of our fathers*; this *God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest*, 1. *Know his will*, the will of his precept that is to be done by thee, the will of his providence that is to be done concerning thee; he *hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know* it in a more peculiar manner; not of man, or by man; but immediately by *the revelation of Christ*, Gal. i. 1, 12. Those whom God *hath chosen*, he *hath chosen to know his will*, and to do it. 2. *That thou shouldest see that just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth*, and so *shouldest know his will* immediately from himself. This was what Paul was, in a particular manner, chosen to, above others; it was a distinguishing favour, that he should see Christ here upon earth after his ascension into heaven! Stephen saw him *standing at the right hand of God*, but Paul saw him standing at his right hand! This honour none had but Paul: Stephen saw him, but we do not find that he *heard the voice of his mouth*, as Paul did, who saith, *he was lost of all seen of him, as of one born out of due time*, 1 Cor. xv. 8. Christ is here called *that just One*; for he is *Jesus Christ the righteous*, and suffered wrongfully. Observe, Those whom God *hath chosen to know his will*, must have an eye to Christ, and must see him, and *hear the voice of his mouth*; for it is by him that God has made known his will, his good-will to us, and he hath said, *Hear ye him*.

(2.) In the after manifestation of himself, by him, to others, ver. 15. *Thou shalt be his witness*, not only a monument of his grace, as a pillar may be, but a witness, *viva voce*; thou shalt publish his gospel, as that which thou hast experienced the power of, and been delivered into the mould of; *thou shalt be his witness unto all men*, Gentiles as well as Jews, *of which thou hast seen and heard*, now at the very first. And, finding Paul so particularly relating the manner of his conversion in his apologies for himself, here, and chap. xxvi. we have reason to think that he frequently made the same narrative in his preaching for the conversion of others; he told them *what God had done for his soul*, to encourage them to hope that he would do something for their souls.

4. The counsel and encouragement he gave him to join himself to the Lord Jesus by baptism, ver. 16. *Arise, and be baptized*: He had, in his circumcision, been given up to God, but he must now, by baptism, be given up to God in Christ; must embrace the Christian religion, and the privileges of it, in submission to

the precepts of it: This must now be done immediately upon his conversion, and so was added to his circumcision; but *to the seed of the faithful* it comes in the room of it; for it is, as that was to Abraham, and his believing seed, *a seal of the righteousness which is by faith*. 1. The great gospel privilege, which, by baptism, we have sealed to us, is, *the remission of sins*: *Be baptized, and wash away thy sins*, i. e. receive the comfort of the pardon of thy sins in and through Jesus Christ, and lay hold on his righteousness for that purpose; and receive power against sin, for the mortifying of thy corruption; for our being washed, includes our being both justified and sanctified, 1 Cor. vi. 11. *Be baptized, and rest not in the sign, but make sure of the thing signified, the putting away of the filth of sin*. 2. The great gospel duty, which, by our baptism, we are bound to, is, *to call on the name of the Lord, the Lord Jesus*; to acknowledge him to be our Lord, and our God, and to apply ourselves to him accordingly; to give honour to him, to put all our petitions in his hand: *To call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord* (Son of David, have mercy on us) is the periphrasis of a Christian, 1 Cor. i. 2. We must *wash away our sins, calling on the name of the Lord*, i. e. we must seek for the pardon of our sins in Christ's name, and in dependence on him, and his righteousness: And in prayer, we must not any longer call God, *the God of Abraham*, but *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and, in him, *our Father*; in every prayer, our eye must be to Christ. 3. We must do this quickly: *Why tarriest thou?* Our covenanting with God, in Christ, is needful work, that must not be deferred: The case is so plain, that it is needless to deliberate; and the hazard so great, that it is folly to delay: Why should not that be done at the present time, that must be done some time, or we are undone?

Fifthly, How he was commissioned to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles; this was the great thing which they were so angry at him for, and therefore it was requisite he should for this, in a special manner, produce a divine warrant; and here he doth it. This commission he did not receive presently upon his conversion, for this was at *Jerusalem*, whither he did not go till *three years after*, or more, Gal. i. 18. and whether it was then, or afterwards, that he had this vision here spoken of, we are not certain.

But, to reconcile them, if possible, to his preaching of the gospel among the *Gentiles*, he tells them,

1. That he received his orders to do it when he was at prayer, begging of God to appoint him his work, and to shew him the course he should steer; and, which was a circumstance that would have some weight with those he was now speaking to, he was *at prayer in the temple*, which was to be called, *a house of prayer for all people*; not only in which all people should pray, but in which all people should be prayed for. Now as Paul's praying in *the temple*, was an evidence, contrary to their malicious suggestion, that he had a veneration for *the temple*, though he did not make an idol of it, as they did; so God's giving him this commission *there in the temple*, was an evidence, that the sending him *to the Gentiles*, would be no prejudice *to the temple*, unless the Jews, by their infidelity, made it so: Now it would be a great satisfaction to Paul afterwards, in the execution of this commission, to reflect upon it that he received it when he was at prayer.

2. He received it in a vision, he fell into a *trance*, ver. 17. his external senses, for the present, locked up; he was in an ecstasy, as when he was *caught up into the third heaven*, and was not at that time sensible whether he was *in the body, or out of the body*: In this *trance* he saw Jesus Christ, not with the eyes of his body, as at his conversion, but represented to the eyes of his mind, ver. 18. *I saw him, saying unto me*. Our eye must be upon Christ, when we are receiving the law from his mouth; and we must not only hear him speaking, but see him speaking to us.

3. Before Christ gave him a commission *to go to the Gentiles*, he told him, it was to no purpose for him to think of doing any good at *Jerusalem*, so that they must not blame him, but themselves, if he were *sent to the Gentiles*: Paul came to *Jerusalem* full of hopes, that, by the grace of God, he might be instrumental to bring *those to the faith of Christ*, who had stood it out against the ministry of the other apostles; and, perhaps, this was it he was now praying for, that, he having had his education at *Jerusalem*, and being well known there, might be employed in *gathering the children of Jerusalem to Christ, that were not yet gathered*; which he thought he had particular advantages for the doing of: But Christ crosseth the measures he had laid; *Make haste, saith he, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem*; for though thou thinkest thyself more likely to work upon them than others, thou wilt find they are more prejudiced against thee than against any other, and therefore *will not receive thy testimony concerning me*. As God knows before who will receive *the gospel*, so he knows who will reject it.

4. Paul, notwithstanding this, renews his petition that he might be employed at *Jerusalem*, because they knew, better than any did, what he had been before his conversion, and therefore must ascribe so great a change in him to the power of almighty grace, and, consequently, give the greater regard to his testimony; thus he reasoned, both with himself, and with the Lord, and

and thought he reasoned right, *ver. 19, 20.* Lord, saith he, *they know*, that I was once of their mind, that I was as bitter an enemy as any of them to *such as believed on thee*, that I irritated the civil power against them, and *imprisoned them*, and turned the edge of the spiritual power against them too, and *beat them in every synagogue*. And therefore they will not impute my preaching Christ to education, or any prepossession in his favour, as they do that of other ministers, but will the more readily regard what I say, because they know I have myself been *one of them*; particularly in Stephen's case; they know that when he was stoned, I was standing by, I was aiding and abetting, and *consenting to his death*, and in token of that, *kept the clothes of them that stoned him*. Now, Lord, saith he, if I appear among them preaching the doctrine that Stephen preached and suffered for, they will no doubt *receive my testimony*. No, (saith Christ to him) they will not; but will be more exasperated against thee as a *deserter from*, than against others whom they look upon only as strangers to, their constitution.

5. Paul's petition for a warrant to preach the gospel at Jerusalem is over-ruled, and he has peremptory orders to go *among the Gentiles*, *ver. 21.* *Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles*. Note, God often gives gracious answers to the prayers of his people, not in the thing itself that they pray for, but in something better. Abraham prays, *O that Ishmael may live before thee*; and God hears him for Isaac. So Paul here prays that he may be an instrument of converting souls at Jerusalem; no, saith Christ, but thou shalt be employed among the Gentiles, and *more shall be the children of the desolate, than those of the married wife*. It is God that appoints his labourers both their day and their place, and it is fit they should acquiesce in his appointment, though it may cross their own inclinations. Paul hankers after Jerusalem; to be a preacher there was the top of his ambition; but Christ designs him greater preferment; he shall not enter into other mens labours, as the other apostles did, *John iv. 38.* but shall break up new ground, and *preach the gospel there where Christ was not named*, *Rom. xv. 20.* So often doth providence contrive better for us, than we for ourselves; to the conduct of that we must therefore refer ourselves, *He shall chuse our inheritance for us*. Observe, Paul shall not go to preach among the Gentiles without a commission, *I will send thee*: And if Christ send him, his Spirit shall go along with him, he will stand by him, will carry him on, and bear him out, and give him to see the fruit of his labours. Let not Paul set his heart upon Judea and Jerusalem, for he must be sent far hence, his call must be quite another way, and his work of another kind. And it might be a mitigation of the offence of this to the Jews, that he did not set up a Gentile church in the neighbour nations; others did that, just under their nose; he was sent to places at a distance, a vast way off, where what he did could not be thought an annoyance to them.

Now if they would lay all this together, surely they would see that they had no reason to be angry with Paul for preaching among the Gentiles, or construe it an act of ill-will to his own nation, for he was compelled to it contrary to his own mind, by an overruling command from heaven.

22. And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lift up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23. And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air, 24. The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging: that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. 25. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26. When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou dost; for this man is a Roman. 27. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free-born*. 29. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. 30. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Paul was going on with his account of himself, had shewed them his commission to preach among the Gentiles, without any peevish reflexions upon the Jews. And we may suppose designed next to shew how he was afterwards, by a special direction of the holy Ghost at Antioch, separated to this service, how tender he was of

the Jews, and how respectful to them, and how careful to give them the precedence in all places whither he came, and to unite Jews and Gentiles in one body; and then to shew how wonderfully God had owned him, and what good service had been done to the interest of God's kingdom among men in general, without damage to any of the true interests of the Jewish church in particular. But whatever he designs to say, they resolve he shall say no more to them; *they gave him audience to this word*: Hitherto they had heard with patience, and some attention: But when he speaks of being *sent to the Gentiles*, though it was what Christ himself said to him, they cannot bear it, not so much as to hear the Gentiles named, such an enmity had they to them, and such a jealousy of them. Upon the mention of this, they have no manner of patience; but forget all rules of decency and equity; thus were they *provoked to jealousy by them that were no people*, *Rom. x. 19.*

Now here we are told,

First, How *furios* and *outrageous* the people were against Paul, for mentioning the Gentiles, as taken into the cognizance of divine grace, and so justifying his preaching among them.

1. They *interrupted* him, by *lifting up their voice*, to put him into confusion, and that no body might hear a word he said. Gallied consciences kick at the least touch; and those who are resolved not to be ruled by reason, commonly refuse not to hear it, if they can help it. And the spirit of enmity against the gospel of Christ commonly shews itself in silencing the ministers of Christ and his gospel, and stopping their mouths, as the Jews did Paul's here. Their fathers had said to the best of Jews, *see not, Isa. xxx. 10.* And so they to the best of *speakers*, *speech not: Forbear, wherefore shouldst thou be smitten?* 2 Chron. xxv. 16.

2. They clamoured against him as one that was unworthy of life, much more of liberty; without weighing the arguments he had urged in his own defence, or offering to make any answer to them, they cried out with a confused noise, *away with such a fellow as this from the earth*, who pretends to have a commission to go preach to the Gentiles, why, *it is not fit that he should live*. Thus the men that have been the greatest blessings of their age, have been represented not only as the burthens of the earth, but the plague of their generation. He that was worthy of the greatest honours of life, is condemned as not worthy of life itself. See what different sentiments God and men have of good men, and yet they both agree in this, that they are not likely to live long in this world; Paul saith of the godly Jews, that they were men *of whom the world was not worthy*, *Heb. xi. 38.* And therefore they must be removed that the world may be justly punished with the loss of them: The ungodly Jews here say of Paul. That it was *not fit he should live*, and therefore he must be removed that the world may be eased of the burthen of him, as of the *two witnesses*, *Lev. xi. 10.*

3. They went stark mad against Paul, and against the chief captain for not killing him immediately, at their request, or throwing him as a prey into their teeth, that they might devour him, *ver. 23.* as men whose reason was quite lost in passion, they *cried out* like roaring lions or ranging bears, and howled like the evening wolves; they *cast off their clothes*, with fury and violence, as much as to say, that thus they would tear him, if they could but come at him: Or rather, they thus shewed how ready they were to stone him; they that stoned Stephen, threw off their clothes, *ver. 20.* Or, they *rent their clothes*, as if he had spoken blasphemy; and *threw dust into the air* in detestation of it; or signifying how ready they were to throw stones at Paul, if the chief captain would have permitted them. But why should they go about to give a reason for these expressions of fury, which they themselves could not account for? All they intended was to make the chief captain sensible how much they were enraged and exasperated at Paul, so that he could not do any thing to gratify them more than to let them have their will against him.

4. The *chief captain* took care for his safety, by ordering him to be *brought into the castle*, *ver. 24.* A prison sometimes has been a protection to good men from popular rage. Paul's hour was not yet come, he had not finished his testimony, and therefore God raised up one that took care of him, when none of his friends durst appear on his behalf. *Grant not, O Lord, the desire of the wicked.*

5. He ordered him the torture, to force from him a confession of some flagrant crimes, which had provoked the people to such an uncommon violence against him. He *bade that he should be examined by scourging*, as now in some countries by the rack, *that he might know, wherefore they cried so against him*. Herein he did not proceed fairly; he should have singled out some of the clamorous, tumultuous complainants, and taken them into the castle, as breakers of the peace, and should have examined them, and by *scourging* too, what they had to lay to the charge of a man that could give so good an account of himself, and did not appear to have done any thing worthy of death or of bonds. It was proper to ask them, but not at all proper to ask Paul, *wherefore they cried so against him?* He could tell that he had given them no just cause to do it; if there were any cause, let them produce it. No man is bound to *accuse himself*, though he be *guilty*, much less ought he to be compelled to *accuse himself* when he is *innocent*. Surely the *chief captain* did not know the Jewish nation when he concluded, that

that he must needs have done something very ill, whom they cried out against; had they not just thus cried out against our Lord Jesus, *crucify him, crucify him*, when they had not one word to say in answer to the judges question, *why, what evil has he done?* Is this a fair or just occasion to scourge Paul, that a rude, tumultuous mob cry out against him, but cannot tell why or wherefore, and therefore he must be forced to tell.

6. Paul pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen, by which he was exempted from all trials and punishments of this nature, *ver. 25.* As they bound him with thongs, or leathern bands to the whipping post, as they used the vilest of malefactors in bridewell, from whom they would extort a confession, he made no outcry against the injustice of their proceedings against an innocent man, but very mildly let them understand the illegality of their proceedings against him as a citizen of Rome; which he had done once before at Philippi, after he had been scourged, *chap. xvi. 37.* but here he makes use of it for prevention. He said to the centurion that stood by, you know the law, pray, is it lawful for you, who are yourselves Romans, to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? The manner of his speaking, plainly speaks what a holy security and serenity of mind this good man enjoyed, not disturbed either with anger or fear in the midst of all those indignities that were done him, and the danger he was in. The Romans had a law (it was called *lex Sempronia*) that if any magistrate did chastise or condemn a freeman of Rome *indicta causa*, without hearing him speak for himself, and deliberating upon the whole of his case, he should be liable to the sentence of the people, who were very jealous of their liberties. It is indeed the privilege of every man not to have wrong done him, except it be proved he has done wrong; as it is of every Englishman by *Magna Charta*, not to be dis-seized of his life of freehold, but by a verdict of twelve men of his peers.

7. The chief captain was surprized at this, and put into a fright; he had taken Paul to be a vagabond Egyptian, and wondered he could speak Greek, *chap. xxi. 37.* but is much more surprized now he finds that he is as good a gentleman as himself. How many men of great worth and merit are despised because they are not known! are looked upon and treated as the *off-scouring of all things*, when those that count them so, if they knew their true character, would own them to be of the *excellent ones of the earth*. The chief captain had centurions, under officers attending him, *chap. xxi. 32.* One of these reports this matter to the chief captain, *ver. 26.* Take heed what thou doest, for this man is a Roman, and what indignity is done to him, will be construed an offence against the majesty of the Roman people; as they loved to speak. They all knew what a value was put upon this privilege of the Roman citizens. Tully extols it in one of his orations, against Verres, *O nomen dulce libertatis, O jus eximium nostræ civitatis! O lex Porcia! O leges Sempronie! facinus est vincire Romanum civem, scelus verberare.* Its a crime to bind a Roman citizen, but an unpardonable one to beat him. Therefore (saith the centurion) let us look to ourselves; if this man be a Roman, and we do him any indignity, we shall be in danger to lose our commissions at least. Now,

1. The chief captain would be satisfied of the truth of this from his own mouth, *ver. 37.* Tell me, art thou a Roman? Art thou intitled to the privileges of a Roman citizen? Yes: saith Paul, I am, and, perhaps, produced some ticket or instrument which proved it; for otherwise, they would scarce have taken his word.

2. The chief captain very freely compares notes with him upon this matter, and it appears, that privilege Paul had as a Roman citizen, was of the two more honourable than the colonel's; for the colonel owns that his was purchased, I am a freeman of Rome, but with a great sum obtained I this freedom, it cost me dear, how came you by it? why truly, saith Paul, I was free-born. Some think he became entitled to his freedom by the place of his birth, as a native of Tarsus, a city privileged by the emperor with the same privileges that Rome itself enjoyed; others rather think, it was by his father or grandfather having served in the wars, between Cesar and Antony, or some other of the civil wars of Rome, and being for some signal piece of service rewarded with a freedom of the city; and so Paul came to be free-born; and here he pleads it for his own preservation; for which end, not only we may, but we ought to use all lawful means.

3. This put an immediate stop to Paul's trouble; they that were appointed to examine him by scourging, quitted the spot, they departed from him, *ver. 29.* lest they should run themselves into a snare. Nay, and the colonel himself, though we may suppose him to have a considerable interest, was afraid when he heard he was a Roman, because though he had not beaten him, yet he had bound him, in order to his being beaten. Thus many are restrained from evil practices by the fear of man, that would not be restrained from them by the fear of God. See here the benefit of human laws and magistracy, and what reason we have to be thankful to God for them; for even when they have given no countenance or special protection to God's people and ministers, yet by their general support of equity and fair dealing between man and man, they have served to check the rage of wicked and unreasonable illegal men, that otherwise would know no bounds, and to

say, *hitherto it shall come, but no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed.* And therefore this service we owe to all in authority, to pray for them, because this benefit we have reason to expect from them, whether we have it or no, as long as we are quiet and peaceable, to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

4. The governor the next day brought Paul before the Sanhedrin, *ver. 30.* He first loosed him from his bands, that those might not pre-judge his cause, and that he might not be charged with having pinioned a Roman citizen, and then summoned the chief priests and all their council to come together to take cognizance of Paul's case; for he found it to be a matter of religion, and therefore looked upon them to be the most proper judges of it. Gallio in this case discharged Paul; finding it to be a matter of their law, he drove the prosecutors from the judgment-seat, Acts xviii. 16. and would not concern himself at all in it: But this Roman, that was a military man, kept Paul, in custody, and appealed from the rabble to the general assembly. Now, 1. We may hope that hereby he intended Paul's safety, as thinking if he were an innocent and inoffensive man, though the multitude might be incensed against him, yet the chief priests and the elders would do him justice and clear him; for they were, or should be, men of learning, and consideration, and their court governed by rules of equity. When the prophet could find no good among the poorer sort of people, he concluded it was because they knew not the way of the Lord, nor the judgments of their God, and promised himself that he should speed better among the great men, as the chief captain here did, but soon found himself disappointed there; these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds, Jer. v. 4, 5. But, 2. That which he is here said to aim at, is the gratifying of his own curiosity. He would have known the certainty whereof he was accused of the Jews. Had he sent for Paul to his own chamber, and talked freely with him, he might soon have learned from him that which would have done more than satisfy his enquiry, and which might have persuaded him to be a Christian. But it is too common for great men to affect to set that at a distance from them which might awaken their consciences, and to desire to have no more of the knowledge of God's ways, than may serve them to talk of.

C H A P. XXIII.

The close of the foregoing chapter left Paul in the high priest's court, into which the chief captain (whether to his advantage or no, I know not) had removed his cause from the mob; and if his enemies act there against him with less noise, yet it is with more subtilty. Now here we have, (1.) Paul's protestation of his own integrity, and of a civil respect to the high priest, however, he had upon a sudden spoken warmly to him, and justly, *ver. 1,—5.* (2.) Paul's prudent contrivance to get himself clear of them, by setting the Pharisees and Sadducees at variance one with another, *ver. 6,—9.* (3.) The governors seasonable interposal to rescue him out of their hands likewise, *ver. 10.* (4.) Christ's more comfortable appearing to him, to animate him against these difficulties that lay before him, and to tell him what he must expect, *ver. 11.* (5.) A bloody conspiracy of some desperate Jews to kill Paul, and their drawing in the chief priests and the elders to be aiders and abettors with them in it, *ver. 12,—15.* (6.) The discovery of this conspiracy to Paul, and by him to the chief captain, who perceived so much of their inveterate malice against Paul, that he had reason enough to believe the truth of it, *ver. 15,—22.* (7.) The chief captain's care of Paul's safety, by which he prevented the execution of the design; he sent him away immediately under a strong guard, from Jerusalem to Cesarea, which was now the residence of Felix the Roman governor, and there he safely arrived, *ver. 23,—35.*

1. AND Paul earnestly beholding the council, said, Men, and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until this day. 2. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him, to smite him on the mouth. 3. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4. And they that stood by, said, revilest thou God's high priest? 5. Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest. For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Perhaps, when Paul was brought, as he often was (*corpus cum causa*) before heathen magistrates and councils, where he and his cause were slighted, because not at all understood, he thought if he were brought before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, he should be able to deal with them to some good purpose, and yet we do not find that he works at all upon them. Here we have,

First, Paul's protestation of his own integrity; whether the chief priest put any question to him, or the chief captain made any representation of his case to the court, we are not told; But Paul appeared here,

1. With a good courage; he was not at all put out of countenance upon his being brought before such an august assembly, which in his youth he had conceived such a veneration for; nor did he fear their calling him to an account about the letters they gave him to Damascus, to persecute the Christians there, though (for ought we know) this was the first time he had ever seen them since; but he *earnestly beheld the council*. When Stephen was brought before them, they thought to have *faced him down*, but could not, such was his holy confidence; they *looked stedfastly on him, and his face was as that of an angel*, chap. vi. 15. Now Paul was brought before them, he thought to have *faced them down*, but could not, such was their *wicked impudence*. However, now was fulfilled in him what God promised to Ezekiel, chap. iii. 8, 9. *I have made thy face strong against their faces; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks*.

2. With a good conscience, and that gave him a good courage. *Hic murus abeneus esto, nil conscire sibi*. He said, *men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day*. However I may be reproached, my heart doth not reproach me, but witnesseth for me. 1. He had always been a man inclined to religion; he never was a man that lived *at large*, but always put a difference between moral good and evil, even in his unregenerate state, he was as *touching the righteousness that was in the law, blameless*. He was no unthinking man, who never considered what he did, no designing man, who cared not what he did, so he could but compass his own ends. 2. Even when he *persecuted the church of God*, yet he thought he ought to do it, and that he did God service in it. Though his conscience was *misinformed*, yet he acted according to the dictates of it. See chap. xxvi. 9. 3. He seems rather to speak of the time since his conversion, since he left the service of the high priest, and fell under their displeasure for so doing; he doth not say, *from my beginning until this day*; but all the time in which you have looked upon me as a deserter, an apostate, and an enemy to your church, even *to this day*, I have *lived in all good conscience before God*; whatever you may think of me, I have in every thing approved myself to God, and lived honestly, Heb. xiii. 18. He had aimed at nothing but to *please God, and do his duty*, in those things for which they were so incensed against him; in all he had done towards the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, and the setting of it up among the Gentiles, he had acted conscientiously. See here the character of an honest man, 1. He sets God *before him*, and lives as in his sight, and under his eyes, and with an eye to him. *Walk before me, and be thou upright*. 2. He *makes conscience* of what he saith and doth, and though he may be under some mistakes, yet according to the best of his knowledge he abstains from that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. 3. He is *universally* conscientious; and they that are not so, are not at all truly conscientious; is so in *all manner of conversation*. I have lived in all good conscience; have had my *whole conversation* under the direction and dominion of conscience. 4. He continues so, and perseveres in it; I have lived so *until this day*. Whatever changes pass over him, he is still the same, strictly conscientious. And those who thus *live in all good conscience before God*, may, like Paul here, *lift up their face without spot*; and if their hearts condemn them not, may have confidence both towards God and man, as Job had when he *still held fast his integrity*, and Paul himself whose rejoicing was this, the testimony of his conscience.

Secondly, The abuse which Ananias the high priest did to Paul; he *commanded them that stood by*, the beaules that attended the court, to *smite him on the mouth*, ver. 2. to give him a dash on the teeth, either with a hand, or with a rod. Our Lord Jesus was thus *despitefully* used in this court, by one of the servants, John xviii. 22. as was foretold, Mic. v. 1. *They shall smite the Judge of Israel upon the cheek*: But here was an *order of court* for the doing of it, and it is likely it was done.

1. The high priest was highly offended at Paul; some think, because he looked so boldly and earnestly at the council, as if he would face them down; others, because he did not address himself particularly to him, as president, with some title of honour and respect, but spoke freely and familiarly to them all, as men and brethren. His protestation of his integrity, was provocation enough to one who was resolved to *run him down*, and make him odious. When he could charge him with no crime, he thought it was crime enough, that he asserted his own innocence.

2. In his rage he ordered him to be smitten, so to put disgrace upon him, and to be smitten *on the mouth*, as having offended with his lips, and in token of his enjoining him silence. This brutish, barbarous method he had recourse to when he *could not answer the wisdom and spirit wherewith he spake*. Thus Zedekiah smote Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 24. and Pashur smote Jeremiah, Jer. xx. 2. when they spoke in the name of the Lord; if therefore we see such indignities done to good men; nay, if they be done to us for well doing, and well saying, we must not think it strange, Christ will give those the *kisses of his mouth*, (Cant. i. 2.) who for his sake receive *blows on the mouth*. And though it may be expected that as Solomon saith, *every man should kiss his lips that giveth a right answer*, Prov. xxiv. 26. yet we often see the contrary.

Thirdly, The denunciation of the wrath of God against the high priest for this *wickedness in the place of judgment*, Eccl. iii. 16. and it agrees with what follows there, ver. 17. with which Solomon comforted himself, *I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; God shall smite thee, thou whited wall*, ver. 3. Paul did not speak this in any sinful heat or passion, but in a holy zeal against the high priest's abuse of his power, and with something of a prophetick spirit, not at all with a spirit of revenge.

1. He gives him his due character; *thou whited wall*, i. e. thou hypocrite, a mud-wall, trash and dirt, and rubbish underneath, but plaistered over, or white-washed. It is the same comparison in effect with that of Christ, when he compares the Pharisees to whited sepulchres, Mat. xxiii. 27. They that *daubed with untempered mortar*, failed not to daub themselves over with something that made them look not only clean but gay.

2. He reads him his just doom. *God shall smite thee*, shall bring upon thee his sore judgments, esp. cially spiritual judgments. Grotius thinks this was fulfilled soon after in his removal from the office of the high priest, either by death or deprivation, for he finds another in that office a little while after this; probably he was smitten by some sudden stroke of divine vengeance. Jeroboam's hand was withered, when it was stretched out against a prophet.

3. He assigns a good reason for that doom; for *sittest thou* there as president in the supreme judicature of the church, pretending to *judge me after the law*, to convict and condemn me by the law, and yet *commandest me to be smitten*, before any crime is proved upon me, which is *contrary to the law*? No man must be beaten unless he was *worthy to be beaten*, Deut. xxv. 2. It is against all law human and divine, natural and positive, to hinder a man from making his defence, and to condemn him unheard. When Paul was beaten by the rabble, he could say, *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*; but it is inexcusable in a high priest that is appointed to judge *according to the law*.

Fourthly, The offence which was taken at this bold word of Paul's, ver. 4. *They that stood by said, revilest thou God's high priest*? It is probably conjectured that those who blamed Paul for what he said were *believing Jews*, who were *zealous for the law*, and consequently for the honour of the high priest; and therefore took it heinously that Paul should thus reflect upon him, and checked him for it. See here then,

1. What a hard game Paul had to play, when his friends were abusive to him, and his friends were so far from standing by him, and appearing for him, that they were ready to find fault with his management.

2. How apt even the disciples of Christ themselves are to over-value outward pomp and power. As because the temple had been *God's temple*, and a magnificent structure, there were those who followed Christ that could not bear to have any thing said that threatened the destruction of it; so because the high priest had been *God's high priest*, and was a man that made a figure, though he was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, yet these were disgusted at Paul for giving him his due.

Fifthly, The excuse that Paul made for what he had said, because he found it was a stumbling block to his weak brethren, and might prejudice them against him in other things. These Jewish Christians though weak, yet were brethren, so he calls them here, and in consideration of that is almost ready to recal his words; for *who is offended*, said he, *and I burn not*? 2 Cor. xi. 29. His fixed resolution was rather to abridge himself in the use of his Christian liberty, than give offence to a weak brother; rather than do it, he will *eat no flesh while the world stands*, 1 Cor. viii. 13. And so here though he had taken a liberty to tell the high priest his own, yet when he found it gave offence, he cried *peccavi*, wished he had not done it, and though he did not beg the high priest's pardon, nor excuse it to him, yet he begs their pardon who took offence at it, because this was not a time to inform them better, nor to say what he could say to justify himself.

1. He excuseth it with this, that he did not consider, when he said it, who he spoke to, ver. 5. *I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest* *ἐκ ἡμεῶν*, I did not just then think of the dignity of his place, or else I would have spoken more respectfully to him. I see not how we can with any probability think that Paul did not know him to be the high priest, for Paul had been seven days in the temple at the time of the feast where he could not miss of seeing the high priest; and his telling him that *he sat to judge him after the law*, shews that he knew who he was; but, saith he, I did not consider it. Dr. Whitby puts this sense upon it; that the prophetick impulse that was upon him, and inwardly moved him to say what he did, did not permit him to advert that it was the high priest, lest this law might have restrained him from complying with that impulse, but the Jews acknowledged that prophets might use a liberty in speaking of rulers which others might not, as Isa. i. 10, 23. Or, (as he quotes the sense of Grotius and Lightfoot) Paul doth not go about to excuse what he had said in the least, but rather to justify it; I own that *God's high priest* is not to be reviled, but I do not own this Ananias to be high priest, he is an usurper, he came to the office by bribery and corruption; and the

Jewish rabbins say, that he who doth so is neither a judge, nor to be honoured as such. Yet,

2. He takes care that what he had said should not be drawn into a precedent, to the weakening of the obligation of that law in the least, for *it is written*, and it remains a law in full force, *thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*. It is for the publick good that the honour of magistracy should be supported and not suffer for the miscarriages of those that are intrusted with it; and therefore that a decorum be observed in speaking both of, and to princes and judges, even in Job's time it was *not thought fit to say to a king, thou art wicked, or to princes, you are ungodly*, Job xxxiv. 18. even when we *do well and suffer for it, we must take it patiently*, 1 Pet. ii. 20. Not as if great men may not hear of their faults, and publick grievances be complained of by proper persons, and in a decent manner, but there must be a particular tenderness for the honour and reputation of those in authority more than of other people, because the law of God requires a particular reverence to be paid to them, as God's vicegerents; and it is of dangerous consequence to have those any way countenanced who *despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities*, Jude 8. *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought*, Eccl. x. 20.

6. But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question. 7. And when he had so said, There arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9. And there arose great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. 10. And when there arose great dissension, the chief captain fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. 11. And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Many are the troubles of the righteous, but some way or other the Lord delivereth them out of them all. Paul owned he had experienced the truth of this in the persecutions he had undergone among the Gentiles, see 2 Tim. iii. 11. *out of them all the Lord delivered me*. And now he finds that he that has delivered, doth, and will. He that delivered him in the foregoing chapter from the tumult of the people, here delivers him from that of the elders.

First, His own prudence and ingenuity stands him in some stead, and contributes much to his escape. Paul's greatest honour and that upon which he most valued himself was that he was a Christian, and an apostle of Christ, and all his other honours he despised and made nothing of, in comparison with those, *counting them but dung that he might win Christ*, and yet he had sometimes occasion to make use of his other honours, and they did him service. His being a citizen of Rome saved him in the foregoing chapter from being whipt by the chief captain as a vagabond, and here his being a Pharisee saved him from being condemned by the Sanhedrin as an apostate from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. It will consist very well with our willingness to suffer for Christ, to use all lawful methods, nay, and arts too, both to prevent suffering, and to extricate ourselves out of it.

The honest policy Paul used here for his own preservation was to divide his judges, and to set them at variance one with another about him; and by incensing one part of them more against him, to engage the contrary part for him.

1. The great council was made up of Sadducees and Pharisees, and Paul perceived it; he knew the characters of many of them, ever since he lived among them, and saw those among them whom he knew to be Sadducees, and others whom he knew to be Pharisees, ver. 6. *One part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees*, and, perhaps, near an equal part. Now these differed very much from one another, and yet they ordinarily agreed well enough to do the business of the council together.

1. The Pharisees were bigots; zealous for the ceremonies, not only those which God had appointed, but those which were enjoined by the tradition of the elders; they were great sticklers for the authority of the church, and enforcing obedience to its injunctions, which occasioned many quarrels between them and our Lord Jesus; but at the same time they were very orthodox in the faith of the Jewish church concerning the world of spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

2. The Sadducees were deists; no friends to the scripture, or divine revelation. The books of Moses they admitted as contain-

ing a good history, and a good law, but had little regard to the other books of the Old Testament, see Mat. xxii. 23. The account here given of these Sadducees is, 1. That they deny the resurrection, not only the return of the body to life, but a future state of rewards and punishments; they had neither hope of eternal happiness, nor dread of eternal misery, nor expectation of any thing on the other side death; and it was upon these principles that they said, *it is vain to serve God, and called the proud happy*, Mal. iii. 14, 15. 2. That they denied the existence of angels and spirits, and allowed of no being but matter. They thought that God himself was corporeal, and had parts and members as we have. When they read of angels in the Old Testament they supposed them to be messengers that God made and sent on his errands as there was occasion; or that they were impressions on the fancies of those they were sent to, and no real existences; that were this or that, or any thing rather than what they were. And as for the souls of men they looked upon them to be nothing else but the temperament of the humours of the body, or, the animal spirits, but denied their existence in a state of separation from the body, and any difference between the soul of a man and of a beast. These, no doubt, pretended to be free-thinkers, but really thought as meanly, absurdly, and slavishly as possible. It is strange how men of such corrupt and wicked principles could come into office, and have a place in the great Sanhedrin; but many of them were of quality and estate, and they complied with the publick establishment, and so got in, and kept in. But they were generally stigmatized as hereticks, were ranked with the Epicureans, and were prayed against, and excluded from eternal life. The prayer which the modern Jews use against Christians, Witius thinks, was designed by Gamaliel, who made it, against the Sadducees; and that they meant them in their usual imprecation, *let the name of the wicked rot*. But how degenerate was the character, and how miserable the state of the Jewish church, when such profane men as these were among their rulers?

2. In this matter of difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees, Paul openly declared himself to be on the Pharisees side, against the Sadducees, ver. 6. He cried out, so as to be heard by all, *I am a Pharisee*, was bred a Pharisee, nay, I was born one, in effect, for I was the son of a Pharisee, my father was one before me, and thus far I am still a Pharisee, that I hope for the resurrection of the dead, and I may truly say, that if the matter were rightly understood it would be found, this was it for which I was now called in question. When Christ was upon earth the Pharisees set themselves most against him, because he witnessed against their traditions and corrupt glosses upon the law; but after his ascension the Sadducees set themselves most against his apostles because they preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead, Acts iv. 1, 2. And it is said, chap. v. 17. that they were the sect of the Sadducees that were filled with indignation at them, because they preached that life and immortality which is brought to light by the gospel. Now here,

1. Paul owns himself a Pharisee so far as the Pharisees, were in the right. Though as Pharisaism was opposed to Christianity, he set himself against it, and against all its traditions that were set up in competition with the law of God, or in contradiction to the gospel of Christ, but as it was opposed to Sadducism, he adhered to it. We must never think the worse of any truth of God, nor more shy of our owning it for its being held by men otherwise corrupt. If the Pharisees will hope for the resurrection of the dead, Paul will go along with them in that hope, and be one of them whether they will or no.

2. He might truly say, that being persecuted, as a Christian, this was the thing he was called in question for, perhaps, he knew that the Sadducees, though they had not such an interest in the common people as the Pharisees had, yet had underhand incensed the mob against him, under pretence of his having preached to the Gentiles, but really because he had preached the hope of the resurrection. However being called in question for his being a Christian he might truly say, he was called in question for the hope of the resurrection of the dead, as he afterwards pleaded, chap. xxiv. 15. and chap. xxvi. 6, 7. Though Paul preached against the traditions of the elders, as his Master had done, and therein opposed the Pharisees, yet he valued himself more upon his preaching for the resurrection of the dead, a future state in which he concurred with the Pharisees.

3. This occasioned a division in the council; it is probable the high priest sided with the Sadducees, as he had done, chap. v. 17. and made it to appear by his rage at Paul, ver. 2. which alarmed the Pharisees so much the more, but so it was, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, ver. 7. for this word of Paul's made the Sadducees more warm, and the Pharisees more cool in the prosecution of him; so that the multitude was divided; ἐξίσθη, there was a Schism, i. e. a quarrel among them, and the edge of their zeal began to turn from Paul against one another; nor could they go on to act against him when they could not agree among themselves, or prosecute him for breaking the unity of the church, when there was so little among them of the unity of the spirit. All the cry had been against Paul, but now there arose a great cry against one another, ver. 9. so much did a fierce, furious spirit prevail among all orders of the Jews at this time, that every thing was done with clamour and noise, and in such a tumultuous manner were the great principles of their religion stickled for

for, by which they received little service; for *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*: Gainfayers may be convinced by fair reasoning, but never by a great cry.

4. The Pharisees hereupon (would one think it!) took Paul's part, *ver. 9. they strove, διαμάχοντο, they fought, saying, We find no evil in this man*; he had carried himself decently and reverently in the temple, and had attended the service of the church; and though it was but occasionally, yet it shewed that he was not such an enemy to it as he was said to be; he had spoken very handsomely in his own defence, and given a good account of himself, and had now declared himself orthodox in the great principles of religion, as well as regular and conscientious in his conversation; and therefore they cannot see he has *done any thing worthy of death, or of bonds*: Nay, they go further, *if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him concerning Jesus*, and put him upon preaching as he doth, though we may not be so far satisfied as to give credit to him, yet we ought to be cautioned not to oppose him, *lest we be found fighting against God*, as Gamaliel, who was himself a Pharisee, had agreed, *chap. v. 39.* Now here,

(1.) We may observe it, to the honour of the gospel, that it was witnessed to, even by its adversaries, and confessions, not only of its innocency, but of its excellency, were extorted sometimes, by the power of truth, even from those that persecuted it. Pilate found no fault in Christ, though he put him to death; nor Festus in Paul, though he continued him in bonds; and the Pharisees here supposed it possible that Paul might have a commission sent him from heaven by an angel to do what he did, and yet it should seem, as elders, they after this joined with the high priest in persecuting him, *chap. xxiv. 1.* They sinned against the knowledge which they not only had, but sometimes owned, as Christ had said of them, *they have both seen and hated both me and my Father*, John xv. 24.

Yet, (2.) We will hope that some of them at least did from henceforward conceive a better opinion of Paul than they had had, and were favourable to him, having had such a satisfactory account, both of his conversation in all good conscience, and of his faith touching another world; and then it must be observed to their honour, that their zeal for the traditions of the elders, which Paul had departed from, was so far swallowed up in a zeal for the great and fundamental doctrines of religion, to which Paul still adhered, that if he will heartily join with them against the Sadducees, and stick to the hope of the resurrection of the dead, they will not think his shaking off the ceremonial law to be any evil in him, but charitably hope that he walks according to the light God has given him by some angel or spirit, and are so far from persecuting him, that they are ready to patronize and protect him. The persecuting Pharisees of the church of Rome are not of this spirit; for let a man be never so sincere and zealous for all the articles of the Christian faith, yet, if he lay not his neck under the yoke of their church's authority, they find evil enough in him to persecute him unto the death.

Secondly, The chief captain's care and conduct stands him in more stead; for when he had thrown this bone of contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees, which had set them together by the ears, and had gained a fair testimony from the Pharisees, yet he is never the nearer, but is in danger of being pulled in pieces by them; the Pharisees pulling to have him set at liberty, and the Sadducees pulling to have him put to death, or thrown to the people, like Daniel into the den of lions; so that the chief captain was forced to come with his soldiers and rescue him, as he had done, *chap. xxi. 32. and chap. xxii. 24.*

1. See here Paul's danger; between his friends and his enemies he had like to have been pulled to pieces, the one hugging him to death, the other crushing him to death; such violences are they liable to that are eminent, and that are become remarkable, as Paul was; who was by some so much beloved, and by others so much maligned!

2. His deliverance; the chief captain ordered his soldiers to go down from the upper wards, and to take him by force from among them, out of that apartment in the temple where he had ordered the council to meet, and to bring him into the castle, or tower of Antonia; for he saw he could make nothing of them, towards the understanding of the merits of his cause.

Thirdly, Divine consolations stood him in most stead of all; the chief captain had rescued him out of the hands of cruel men, but still he had him in custody, and what might be the issue he could not tell; the castle was indeed a protection to him, but withal it was a confinement; and as it was now his preservation from so great a death, it might be his reservation for a greater: We do not find that any of the apostles or elders at Jerusalem came to him, either they had not courage, or they had not admission: Perhaps, in the night following, Paul was full of thoughts and cares what should become of him, and how his present troubles might be turned to answer some good purpose: Then did the Lord Jesus make him a kind visit, and though at midnight, yet a very seasonable one, *ver. 11. The Lord stood by him*, came to his bed-side, though, perhaps, it was but a bed of straw, to shew him that he was all the day long with him really, as sure as he was in the night with him visibly. Note, Whoever is against us we need not fear, if the Lord stand by us; if he undertake our protection, we

may set those that seek our ruin at defiance: *The Lord is with those that uphold my soul*, and then nothing can come amiss.

1. Christ bids him have a good heart on it; *Be of good cheer, Paul*; be not discouraged; let not what has happened sadden thee, nor let what may yet be before thee frighten thee. Note, It is the will of Christ, that his servants that are faithful, should be always cheerful. Perhaps, Paul, in the reflexion, began to be jealous of himself, whether he had done well in what he said to the council the day before, but Christ, by this word, satisfies him, that God approved of his conduct: Or, perhaps, it troubled him that his friends did not come to him, but Christ's visit did itself speak, though he had not said it, *Be of good cheer, Paul.*

2. It is a strange argument which he makes use of to encourage him; *As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* One would think this was but cold comfort; as thou hast undergone a great deal of trouble for me, so thou must undergo a great deal more; and yet this was designed to hearten him; for hereby he is given to understand, 1. That he had been serving Christ, as a witness for him, in what he had hitherto endured: It was for no fault that he was buffeted, and that it was not his former persecuting of the church that was now remembered against him, however he might remember it against himself, but he was still going on with his work. 2. That he had not yet finished his testimony, nor was, by his imprisonment, laid aside as useless, but was only reserved for further service. Nothing disheartened Paul so much as the thought of being taken off from doing service to Christ, and good to souls: *Fear not*, saith Christ, *I have not done with thee.* 3. Paul seems to have had a particular fancy, and an innocent one, to go to Rome, to preach the gospel there, though it was already preached, and a church planted there; yet, being a citizen of Rome, he longed for a journey thither, and had designed it, *chap. xix. 21. After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.* And he had written to the Romans some time ago, that he longed to see them, Rom. i. 11. Now he was ready to conclude, that this had broke his measures, and he should never see Rome; but even in that Christ tells him he should be gratified, since he desired it for the honour of Christ, and to do good.

12. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound our selves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain, that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though you would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. 16. And when Paul's sisters son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entred into the castle, and told Paul. 17. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18. So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. 19. Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20. And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee, that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. 22. So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man, that thou hast shewed these things to me. 23. And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night. 24. And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. 25. And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26. Claudius Lysias, unto the most excellent governor Felix, sendeth greeting. 27. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came

came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29. Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30. And when it was told me, how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewel. 31. Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. 32. On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle. 33. Who when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34. And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35. I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herods judgment-hall.

We have here the story of a plot against the life of Paul; how it was laid, how it was discovered, and how it was defeated.

First, How this plot was laid; they found they could gain nothing by popular tumult, or legal process, and therefore have recourse to the barbarous method of assassination; they will come upon him suddenly and stab him, if they can but get him within their reach; so restless is their malice against this good man, that when one design fails, they will turn another stone! Now observe here,

1. Who they were that formed this conspiracy; they were *certain Jews* that had the utmost degree of indignation against him because he was *the apostle of the Gentiles*, ver. 12. *And they were more than forty* that were in the design, ver. 13. *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!*

2. When the conspiracy was formed; *when it was day*; *Satan had filled their hearts* in the night to purpose it, and, as soon as it was day, they got together to prosecute it; answering the account which the prophet gives of some who *work evil upon their beds, and when the morning is light they practise it*, and are laid under a *wo* for it, Mic. ii. 1. *In the night* Christ appeared to Paul to protect him, *and when it was day*, here were *forty men* appearing against him to destroy him; they were not up so soon, but Christ was up before them; *God shall help her, and that right early*, Psalm xlvii. 5.

3. What the conspiracy was; these men *banded together* in a league, perhaps, they called it a holy league, they engaged to stand by one another, and every one, to his power, to be aiding and assisting to murder Paul. It was strange that so many could so soon be got together, and that in Jerusalem too, that were so perfectly lost to all sense of humanity and honour, as to engage in so bloody a design. Well might the prophet's complaint be renewed concerning Jerusalem, *Isa. i. 21. Righteousness has lodged in it, but now murderers*. What a monstrous idea must these men have formed of Paul, before they could be capable of forming such a monstrous design against him; they must be made to believe that he was the worst of men, an enemy to God, and religion, and the curse and plague of his generation; when really his character was the reverse of all this. What laws of truth and justice so sacred, so strong, which malice and bigotry will not break through?

4. How firm they made it, as they thought, that none of them might fly off upon conscience of the horror of the fact at second thoughts; *they bound themselves under an anathema*, imprecating the heaviest curses upon themselves, their souls, bodies, and families, if they did *not kill Paul*, and so quickly, *that they would not eat or drink till they had done it*. What a complication of wickedness is here! To design to kill an innocent man, a good man, a useful man, a man that had done them no harm, but was willing to do them all the good he could, was *going in the way of Cain*, and spoke them to be of *their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning*; yet, as if this had been a small matter, 1. They bound themselves to it; to incline to do evil, and intend to do it, is bad; but to engage to do it, is much worse: This is entering into covenant with the devil, it is swearing allegiance to the prince of darkness, it is leaving no room for repentance; nay, it is bidding defiance to it. 2. They bound one another to it, and did all they could, not only to secure the damnation of their own souls, but of theirs whom they drew into the association. 3. They shewed a great contempt of the providence of God, and a presumption upon it, in that they bound themselves to do such a thing within so short a time as they could continue fasting, without any proviso or reserve for the disposal of an over-ruling providence. When we say, *to morrow we will do this or that*, be it never so lawful and good, for as much as *we know not what shall be*

on the morrow, we must add, *if the Lord will*. But with what face could they insert a proviso for the permission of God's providence, when they knew what they were about was directly against the prohibitions of God's word? 4. They shewed a great contempt of their own souls and bodies; of their own souls in imprecating a curse upon them if they did not proceed in this desperate enterprize; what a woful dilemma did they throw themselves upon! God certainly meets them with his curse if they do go on in it, and they desire he would if they do not! and of their own bodies too (for wilful sinners are the destroyers of both) in tying themselves out from the necessary supports of life, till they had accomplished a thing which they could never lawfully do, and, perhaps, not possibly do. Such language of hell they speak, that wish God to damn them, and the devil to take them, if they do not do so and so: *As they love cursing, so shall it come unto them*. Some think, the meaning of this curse was, they would either kill Paul, as an Achan, an accursed thing, a troubler of the camp; or, if they did not do it, they would make themselves accursed before God in his stead. 5. They shewed a most eager desire to compass this matter, and an impatience till it was done: Not only like David's enemies *that were mad against him, and sworn against him*, Psalm cii. 8. but like the servants of Job against his enemy, *O that we had of his flesh, we cannot be satisfied!* Job xxxi. 37. Persecutors are said to *eat up God's people as they eat bread*; it is as much a gratification to them, as meat to one that is hungry, Psalm xiv. 4.

5. What method they took to bring it about; there is no getting near Paul in the castle, he is there under the particular protection of the government, and is imprisoned, not, as others are, lest he should do harm, but lest he should have harm done him; and therefore the contrivance is, that *the chief priests and elders* must desire the governor of the castle to let Paul come to them to the council-chamber to be further examined, they have some questions to ask him, or something to say to him, and then, in his passage from the castle to the council, they would put an end to all disputes about Paul, by killing him; thus the plot was laid, ver. 14, 15. Having been all day employed in engaging one another to this wickedness, towards evening they come to the principal members of the great Sanhedrin, and, though they might have concealed their main design, and yet might have moved them upon some other pretence to send for Paul, they are so confident of their approbation of this villainy, that they are not ashamed or afraid to own to them, *that they have bound themselves under a great curse*, without consulting the priests first whether they might lawfully do it, *that they will eat nothing the next day till they have killed Paul*; they design to breakfast the next morning upon his blood; they doubt not but *the chief priests* will not only countenance them in the design, but will lend them a helping hand, and be their tools to get them an opportunity of killing Paul; nay, and tell a lye for them too, pretending to *the chief captain that they would enquire something more perfectly concerning him*, when they meant no such thing. What a mean, what an ill opinion had they of their priests, when they could apply to them on such an errand as this? And yet, as vile as the proposal was which was made to them, for ought appears, *the priests and elders* consented to it, and, at the first word, without boggling at it in the least, promised to gratify them: Instead of reproving them, as they ought, for their wicked conspiracy, they bolstered them up in it, because it was against Paul, whom they hated; and thus they made themselves partakers of the crime, as much as if they had been the first in the conspiracy.

Secondly, How the plot was discovered; we do not find that the plotters, though they took an oath of fidelity, took an oath of secrecy, either because they thought it did not need it, they would every one keep his own counsel, or because they thought they could accomplish it, though it should take wind, and be known; but providence so ordered it, that *it was brought to light*, and so, as effectually to be *brought to nought*. See here,

1. How it was discovered to Paul, ver. 16. There was a youth that was related to Paul, *his sister's son*, whose mother, probably, lived in Jerusalem, and, some how or other, we are not told how, *he heard of their lying in wait*, either over-heard them talking of it among themselves, or got intelligence from some that were in the plot, and *he went into the castle*, probably, as he used to do, to attend on his uncle, and bring him what he wanted, which gave him a free access to him, and *he told Paul* what he heard. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, though the contrivers of them *dig deep to hide them from the Lord*; he can make a *bird of the air to carry the voice*, Eccl. x. 20. or the conspirators own tongues to betray themselves.

2. How it was discovered to the chief captain by the young man that told it Paul. This part of the story is related very particularly, perhaps, because the penman was an eye-witness of the prudent and successful management of this affair, and remembered it with a deal of pleasure. 1. Paul had got a good interest in the officers that attended, by his prudent, peaceable deportment; he could call one of the centurions to him, though a centurion was one in authority that had *judicial* under him, and used to call, not to be called to, and he was ready to come at his call, ver. 17. and he de-

desired

fired that he would introduce *this young man to the chief captain*, to give in an information of something that concerned the honour of the government. 2. *The centurion* very readily gratified him, *ver. 18.* he did not send a common soldier with him, but went himself, to keep *the young man* in countenance, to recommend his errand to *the chief captain*, and to shew his respects to Paul; *Paul the prisoner*, that was his title now, *called me to him, and prayed me to bring this young man to thee*, what his business is I know not, but *he hath something to say to thee.* Note, It is true charity to poor prisoners to act for them, as well as to give to them. *I was sick, and in prison*, and you went on an errand for me, will pass as well in the account, as *I was sick, and in prison, and you came unto me*, to visit me, or sent me a token. Those that have acquaintance and interest, should be ready to use it for the assistance of those that are in distress. This *centurion* helped to save Paul's life by this piece of civility, which should engage us to be ready to do the like when there is occasion. *Open thy mouth for the dumb*, Prov. xxxi. 8. Those that cannot give a good gift to God's prisoners, may yet speak a good word for them. 3. *The chief captain* received the information with a great deal of condescension and tenderness, *ver. 19.* He *took the young man by the hand*, as a friend or father, to encourage him, that he might not be dashed out of countenance, but might be assured of a favourable audience. The notice that is taken of this circumstance, should encourage great men to make themselves easy of access to the meanest, upon any errand which may give them an opportunity of doing good; *to condescend to them of low estate*: This familiarity to which this Roman tribune or colonel admitted Paul's nephew, is here upon record to his honour: Let no man think he disparageth himself by his humility, or charity: He *went with him aside privately*, that none might hear his business, *and asked him, What is it that thou hast to tell me?* Tell me wherein I can be serviceable to Paul. It is probable, *the chief captain* was the more obliging in this case, because he was sensible he had run himself into a præmunire in binding Paul against his privilege as a Roman citizen, which he was willing now to atone for. 4. *The young man* delivered his errand to *the chief captain* very readily and handsomely, *ver. 20, 21.* *The Jews* (he doth not say who, lest he should invidiously reflect upon *the chief priests and the elders*, and his business was to save his uncle's life, not to accuse his enemies) *have agreed to desire thee, that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council*, presuming, that being so little a way, thou wilt send him without a guard, *but do not thou yield unto them*, we have reason to believe thou wilt not when thou knowest the truth, *for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men*, who have sworn to be the death of him, *and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee*, but I have happily got the start of them. Lastly, *The captain* dismissed *the young man* with a charge of secrecy, *See that thou tell no man, that thou hast shewed these things unto me*, *ver. 22.* The favours of great men are not always to be bragged of; and those that cannot keep counsel, are not fit to be employed in business. If it should be known that *the chief captain* had this information brought him, perhaps, they would compass and imagine the death of Paul some other way, therefore keep it private.

Thirdly, How the plot was defeated; *the chief captain* finding how implacable and inveterate the malice of *the Jews* was against Paul, and how restless they were in their designs to do him a mischief, and how near he now was to become himself accessory to it as a minister, resolves to send him away with all speed out of their reach; he received the intelligence with horror and indignation at the baseness and bloody-mindedness of these Jews, and seems afraid lest, if he should continue Paul in his castle here, under never so strong a guard, they would find some way or other to compass their end notwithstanding, either beat the guards, or burn the castle, and, whatever came of it, he would, if possibly, protect Paul, because he looked upon it that he did not deserve such treatment. What a melancholy observation is it, that the Jewish *chief priests*, when they knew of this assassination plot, should countenance it, and assist in it, while a Roman *chief captain*, purely from a natural sense of justice and humanity, when he knows it, sets himself to baffle it, and puts himself to a deal of trouble to do it effectually!

I. He orders a considerable detachment of the Roman forces under his command to get ready *to go to Cesarea*, with all expedition, and to bring Paul thither to *Felix the governor*, where he might sooner expect to have justice done him, than by the great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. I see not but *the chief captain* might, without any unfaithfulness to the duty of his place, have set Paul at liberty, and gave him leave to shift for his own safety; for he was never legally committed to his custody as a criminal, and he himself owns, *that nothing was laid to his charge worthy of bonds*, *ver. 29.* and he ought to have had the same tenderness for his liberty, that he had for his life; but he feared that would have incensed *the Jews* too much against him: Or, perhaps, finding Paul to be a very extraordinary man, he was proud to have him his prisoner, and under his protection, and the mighty parade with which he sent him off, intimates as much: *Two centurions*, or captains of hundreds, are employed in this business, *ver. 23, 24.* they must *get ready two hundred soldiers*, probably, those under their own

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command, *to go to Cesarea*; and with these *seventy horse, and two hundred spearmen*, beside which, some think, were *the chief captain's* guards; whether they were horse or foot is not certain, most probably foot, as pikemen for the protection of the horse. See how justly God brought the Jewish nation under the Roman yoke, when such a party of the Roman army was necessary to restrain them from the most execrable villainies! There needed not all this force, there needed not any of it, to keep Paul from being rescued by his friends; ten times this force would not have kept him from being rescued by an angel, if it had pleased God to work his deliverance that way, as he had sometimes done; but, 1. *The chief captain* designed hereby to expose the Jews, as a headstrong, tumultuous people, that would not be kept within the bounds of duty and decency by the ordinary ministers of justice, but needed to be awed by such a train as this; and hearing how many were in the conspiracy against Paul, he thought less would not serve to defeat their attempt. 2. God designed hereby to encourage Paul; for, being thus attended, he was not only kept safe in the hands of his friends, but out of the hands of his enemies: Yet Paul did *not desire such a guard*, no more than Ezra did, *Ezra viii. 22.* and for the same reason, because he trusted in God's all-sufficiency; but it was owing to the governor's own care: But he was also made considerable; thus his *bonds in Christ* were made manifest all the country over, *Phil. i. 13.* and so great an honour having been put upon them before by the prediction of them, it was agreeable enough that they should be thus honourably attended, *that the brethren in the Lord might wax the more confident by his bonds*, when they saw him rather guarded as the patriot of his country, than guarded against as the pest of his country; and so great a preacher made so great a prisoner.

When his enemies hate him, and, I doubt, his friends neglect him, then doth a Roman tribune patronize him, and carefully provide, 1. For his ease; let *them provide beasts, that they may set Paul on*. Had his Jewish persecutors been to order his remove by *habeas corpus*, to Cesarea, they would have made him run on foot, or dragged him thither in a cart, or on a sledge, or have horsed him behind one of the troopers; but *the chief captain* treats him like a gentleman, though he was his prisoner, and orders him a good pad to ride upon, not at all afraid that he should ride away: Nay, the order being *that they should provide, not a beast, but beasts to set Paul on*, we must either suppose that he was allowed so great a piece of state as to have a led horse, or more, that, if he did not like one, he might take to another; or (as some expositors conjecture) *that he had beasts* assigned him for his friends and companions, as many as pleased to go along with him, to divert him in his journey, and to minister to him. 2. For his security; they have a strict charge given them by their commander in chief, *to bring him safe to Felix the governor*, to whom he is consigned, and who was supreme in all civil affairs among *the Jews*, as this *chief captain* was in military affairs: The Roman historians speak much of this Felix, as a man of mean extraction, but that raised himself, by his shifts, to be governor of Judea; in the execution of which office, Tacitus, *Hist. v.* says this of him, *Per omnem sævitiam ac libidinem jus regium servili ingenio exercuit*, he used royal power with a servile genius: To the judgment of such a man as this is poor Paul turned over; and yet better so, than in the hands of *Ananias the high priest*! Now a prisoner thus upon his deliverance by course of law, ought to be protected as well as a prince.

The chief captain orders, for the greater security of Paul, that he be taken away *at the third hour of the night*, which some understand of three hours after sun-set, that, it being now soon after *the feast of Pentecost*, that is, in the midst of summer, they might have the cool of the night to march in: Others, of *three hours after midnight, in the third watch, about three in the morning*, that they might have the day before them, and might get out of Jerusalem before Paul's enemies were stirring, and so might prevent any popular tumult, and leave them to roar, when they rose, like a lion disappointed of his prey.

2. He writes a letter to *Felix, the governor* of this province, by which he dischargeth himself from any further care about Paul, and leaves the whole matter with Felix. The letter is here inserted *totidem verbis*, *ver. 25.* It is probable, Luke the historian had a copy of it by him, having attended Paul in this remove.

Now, in this epistle, we may observe,

1. The compliments he passeth upon *the governor*, *ver. 26.* He is *the most excellent governor Felix*, this title being given him of course, his excellency, &c. he sends him *greeting*, wisheth him all health and prosperity; may he rejoice, may he ever rejoice.

2. The just and fair account which he gives him of Paul's case: (1.) That he was one *that the Jews* had a mighty pique against, *they had taken him*, and would have killed him, and, perhaps, Felix knew the temper of *the Jews* so well, that he did not think much the worse of him for that, *ver. 27.* (2.) That he had protected him, because *he was a Roman*: When they were about to kill him, *I came with an army*, i. e. a considerable body of men, *and rescued him*, which action of a citizen of Rome would recommend him to the Roman governor. (3.) That he could not understand the merits of his cause, nor what it was that made him so odious to *the Jews*, and obnoxious to their ill-will; he took

the proper method to know, he brought him forth into their council, ver. 28. to be examined there, hoping that, either from their complaints, or his own confessions, he should learn something of the ground of all this clamour, but found that he was accused of questions of their law, ver. 29. about the hope of the resurrection of the dead, ver. 6. This chief captain was a man of sense and honour, and had good principles in him of justice and humanity, and yet see how slightly he speaks of another world, and the great things of that world, as if that were a question which is of undoubted certainty, and which both sides agreed in, except the Sadducees; and as if that were a question only of their law, which is of the utmost concern to all mankind! Or, perhaps, he refers rather to the question about their rituals, than about their doctrinals, and the quarrel he perceived they had with him, was for lessening the credit and obligation of their ceremonial law, which he looked upon as a thing not worth speaking of. The Romans allowed the nations they conquered the exercise of their own religion, and never offered to impose theirs upon them; yet, as conservators of the publick peace, they would not suffer them, under colour of their religion, to abuse their neighbours. (4.) That thus far he understood that there was nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds, much less proved, or made out against him. The Jews had, by their wickedness, made themselves odious to the world, had polluted their own honour, and profaned their own gown, had brought disgrace upon their church, their law, and their holy place, and then they cry out against Paul, as having diminished the reputation of them; and was this a crime worthy of death or of bonds?

3. His referring of Paul's case to Felix, ver. 30. When it was told me, how that the Jews laid wait for the man, to kill him, without any legal process against him, I sent straightway to thee, who art the most proper person to hear the cause, and give judgment upon it, and let his accusers go after him, if they please, and say before thee what they have against him, for, being bred a soldier, I will never pretend to be a judge, and so farewell.

4. Paul is accordingly conducted to Cesarea; the soldiers got him safe out of Jerusalem by night, and left the conspirators to consider whether they should eat and drink or no, before they had killed Paul; and if they would not repent of the wickedness of their oath, as it was against Paul, they were now at leisure to repent of the rashness of it, as it was against themselves; and if any of them did starve themselves to death, in conscience of their oath, and vexation at their disappointment, they fell unpitied: Paul was conducted to Antipatris, which was seventeen miles from Jerusalem, and about the mid-way to Cesarea, ver. 31. from thence the two hundred foot-soldiers, and the two hundred spearmen, returned back to Jerusalem, to their quarters in the castle; for having brought Paul out of danger, there needed not so strong a guard, but the horsemen might serve to bring him to Cesarea, and would do it with more expedition; this they did, not only to save their own labour, but their master's charge; and it is an example to servants, not only to act obediently according to their master's orders, but to act prudently, so as may be most for their master's interest.

5. He was delivered into the hands of Felix, as his prisoner, ver. 33. The officers presented the letter, and Paul with it, to Felix, and so discharged themselves of their trust. Paul had never affected acquaintance or society with great men, but with the disciples wherever he came; yet providence overrules his sufferings so as by them to give him an opportunity of witnessing to Christ before great men; and so Christ had foretold concerning his disciples, that they should be brought before rulers and kings for his sake, for a testimony against them, Mark xiii. 9. The governor enquired of what province of the empire the prisoner originally was, and was told that he was a native of Cilicia, ver. 34. and, 1. He promises him a speedy trial, ver. 35. I will hear thee when thine accusers are come, and will have an ear open to both sides, as becomes a judge. 2. He ordered him into custody, that he should be kept a prisoner in Herod's judgment-hall, in some apartment belonging to that palace, which was denominated from Herod the great, who built it; there he had opportunity of acquainting himself with the great men that attended the governor's court, and, no doubt, he improved what acquaintance he got there to the best purposes.

C H A P. XXIV.

We left Paul a prisoner at Cesarea, in Herod's judgment-hall, expecting his trial to come on quickly; for in the beginning of his imprisonment his affairs moved very quick, but afterwards very slow; in this chapter we have his arraignment and trial before Felix the governor at Cesarea; here is, 1. The appearing of the prosecutors against him, and the setting of the prisoner to the bar, ver. 1, 2. 2. The opening of the indictment against him by Tertullus, who was of council for the prosecutors, and the aggravating of the charge with abundance of compliments to the judge, and malice to the prisoner, ver. 2,—8. 3. The corroborating of the charge by the testimony of the witnesses, or rather, the prosecutors themselves, ver. 9. 4. The prisoner's defence, in which, with all due deference to the governor, ver. 10. he denies the charge,

and challengeth them to prove it, ver. 11,—13. owns the truth, and makes an unexceptionable profession of his faith, which he declares was it that they hated him for, ver. 14,—16. and gives a more particular account of what had passed from their first seizing of him, challenging them to instance in any ill that they had found in him, ver. 17,—21. 5. The adjourning of the cause, and the continuing of the prisoner in custody, ver. 22, 23. 6. The private conversation that was between the prisoner and the judge, by which the prisoner hoped to do good to the judge, and the judge thought to get money by the prisoner, but both in vain, ver. 24,—26. 7. The lengthening out of Paul's imprisonment for two years, till another governor came, ver. 27. where he seems as much neglected, as there had been ado about him.

1. **A**ND after five days, Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. 2. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3. We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee, that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6. Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. 7. But the chief captain Lyfias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8. Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom, thy self mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. 9. And the Jews also assented, saying, that these things were so.

We must suppose that Lyfias, the chief captain, when he had sent away Paul to Cesarea, gave notice to the chief priests, and others, that had appeared against Paul, that, if they had any thing to accuse him of, they must follow him to Cesarea, and there they would find him, and a judge ready to hear them, thinking, perhaps, they would not have given themselves so much trouble; but what will not malice do!

First, We have here the cause followed against Paul, and it is vigorously carried on:

1. Here is no time lost, for they are ready for a hearing after five days; all other business is laid aside immediately to prosecute Paul; so intent are evil men to do evil! Some reckon these five days from Paul's being first seized, and with most probability, for he saith here, ver. 11. that it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem, and he had spent seven in his purifying in the temple, so that these five must be reckoned from the last of those.

2. Those that had been his judges, do themselves appear here as his prosecutors; Ananias himself, the high priest, who had sitten to judge him, now stands to inform against him: One would wonder, (1.) That he should thus disparage himself, and forget the dignity of his place! Shall the high priest turn informer, and leave all his business in the temple at Jerusalem, to go to be called as a prosecutor in Herod's judgment-hall! Justly did God make the priests contemptible and base, when they made themselves so, Mal. ii. 9. (2.) That he should thus discover himself, and his enmity, against Paul! If men of the first rank have a malice against any, they think it policy to employ others against them, and to play least in fight themselves, because of the odium that commonly attends it; but Ananias is not ashamed to own himself a sworn enemy to Paul: The elders attended him, to signify their concurrence with him, and to invigorate the prosecution; for they could not find any attorneys or solicitors that would follow it with so much violence as they would have it. The pains that evil men take in an evil matter, their contrivances, their condescensions and their unwearied industry should shame us out of our coldness, and backwardness, and indifferency in that which is good.

Secondly, We have here the cause pleaded against Paul; the prosecutors brought with them a certain orator named Tertullus, a Roman, skilled in the Roman law and language, and therefore fittest to be employed in a cause before the Roman governor, and most likely to gain favour; the high priest, and elders, though they had their own hearts spiteful enough, did not think their own tongues sharp enough, and therefore retained Tertullus, who, probably, was noted for a satirical wit, to be of council for them; and, no doubt, they gave him a good fee, probably, out of the treasury of the temple, which they had the command of, it being a cause

cause wherein the church was concerned, and therefore must not be starved.

Paul is set to the bar before Felix the governor, *he was called forth*, ver. 2. and *Tertullus's* business is, on the behalf of the prosecutors, to open the information against him, and he is a man that will say any thing for his fee; mercenary tongues will do so: No cause so unjust, but can find advocates to plead it; and yet we hope many advocates so just, as not knowingly to patronize an unrighteous cause; but *Tertullus* was none of those, his speech (or, at least, an abstract of it, for it appears, by Tully's orations, that the Roman lawyers, on such occasions, used to make long harangues) is here reported; and it is made up of flattery and falsehood; it calls evil good, and good evil.

1. One of the worst of men is here applauded as one of the best of benefactors, only because he was the judge. Felix is represented by the historians of his own nation, as well as by Josephus the Jew, as a very ill man, that, depending upon his interest in the court, allowed himself in all manner of wickedness, was a great oppressor, very cruel, and very covetous, patronizing and protecting assassines, *Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 6.* And yet *Tertullus* here, in the name of the high priest, and elders, and, probably, by particular directions from them, and according to the instructions of his breviate, compliments him, and extols him to the sky, as if he were so good a magistrate as never was the like; and this comes the worse from the high priest, and the elders, because he had given a late instance of his enmity to their order; for Jonathan the high priest, or one of the chief priests, having offended him by too free an invective against the tyranny of his government, he got him murdered by some villains, whom he hired for that purpose, and who afterwards did the like for others, as they were hired: *Cujus facinoris quia nemo ultor extitit, invitati hac licentia scarii multos confodiebant, alios propter privatas inimicitias, alios conduci pecunia — etiam in ipso templo.* And yet, to engage him to gratify their malice against Paul, and to return them that kindness for their kindness in over-looking all this, they magnify him as the greatest blessing to their church and nation that ever came among them.

(1.) They are very ready to own it, ver. 2. *By thee we*, of the church, *enjoy great quietness*, and we look upon thee as our patron and protector, *and very worthy deeds are done*, from time to time, *to the whole nation of the Jews, by thy providence*, thy wisdom, and care, and vigilance. To give him his due, he had been instrumental to suppress the insurrection of that Egyptian whom the chief captain spoke of, chap. xxi. 38. but will the praise of that screen him from the just reproach of his tyranny and oppression afterwards? See here, 1. The unhappiness of great men, and a great unhappiness it is, to have their services magnified beyond measure, and never to be faithfully told of their faults; and hereby they are hardened and encouraged in evil. 2. The policy of ill men, by flattering princes in what they do amiss, to draw them in to do worse. The bishops of Rome got to be confirmed in their exorbitant church power, and have been assisted in persecuting the servants of Christ, by flattering and caressing usurpers and tyrants, and so making them the tools of their malice, as the high priest, by his compliments, designed to make Felix here.

(3.) They promise to retain a grateful sense of it, ver. 3. *We accept it always, and in all places*, every where, and at all times, we embrace it, we admire it, *most noble Felix, with all thankfulness*: We will be ready, upon any occasion, to witness for thee, that thou art a wise and good governor, and very serviceable to the country. And if it had been true that he was such a governor, it had been just that they should thus accept his good offices with all thankfulness: The benefits which we enjoy by government, especially by the administration of wise and good governors, is what we ought to be thankful for, both to God and man: This is part of the honour due to magistrates, to acknowledge the quietness we enjoy under their protection, and the worthy deeds done by their prudence.

(3.) They therefore expect his favour in this cause, ver. 4. they pretend a great care not to intrench upon his time, we will not be further tedious to thee, and yet to be very confident of his patience, *I pray thee, that thou wouldst hear us of thy clemency a few words.* All this address is only, *ad captandam benevolentiam*, to induce him to give countenance to their cause; and they were so conscious to themselves that it would soon appear to have more malice than matter in it, that they found it necessary thus to insinuate themselves into his favour: Every body knew that the high priest, and the elders, were enemies to the Roman government, and were uneasy under all the marks of that yoke, and therefore, in their hearts, hated Felix; and yet, to gain their ends against Paul, they, by their council, shew him all this respect; as they did to Pilate and Cesar, when they were persecuting our Saviour. Princes cannot always judge of the affections of their people by their applauses; flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another.

2. One of the best of men is here accused as one of the worst of malefactors, only because he was the prisoner. After a flourish of flattery, in which you cannot see matter for words, he comes to his business, and it is to inform his excellency concerning the

prisoner at the bar; and this part of his discourse is as nauseous for its railery, as the former part is for its flattery. I pity the man, and believe he has no malice against Paul, nor doth he think as he speaks in calumniating him, any more than he did in courting Felix, but as I cannot but be sorry that a man of wit and sense should have such a saleable tongue (as one calls it) so I cannot but be angry at those dignified men that had such malicious hearts as to put such words into his mouth.

Two things *Tertullus* here complains of to Felix, in the name of the high priest and the elders.

1. That the peace of the nation was disturbed by Paul; they could not have baited Christ's disciples, if they had not first dressed them up in the skins of wild beasts, nor have given them as they did the vilest of treatment, if they had not first represented them as the vilest of men: though the characters they gave of them were absolutely false, and there was not the least colour or foundation for them. Innocency, nay, excellency, and usefulness are no fence against calumny, no, nor against the impressions of calumny upon the minds both of magistrates and multitudes to excite their fury and jealousy; for be the representation never so unjust, when it is enforced, as here it was, with gravity and pretence of sanctity, and with assurance and noise, something will stick. The old charge against God's prophets was, that they were the troublers of the land, and against God's Jerusalem, that it was a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and princes, *Ezr. iv. 15, 19.* and against our Lord Jesus, that he perverted the nation, and forbade to give tribute to Cesar; and it is the very same against Paul here. And though utterly false, is averred with all the confidence imaginable. They do not say, we suspect him to be a dangerous man, and have taken him up upon that suspicion, but, as if the thing were past dispute, *we have found him* to be so; we have often and long found him so; as if he were a traitor and rebel already convicted. And yet, after all, there is not a word of truth in this representation, but if Paul's just character be enquired into, it will be found directly the reverse of this here.

1. Paul was a useful man, and a great blessing to his country, a man of exemplary candour and goodness, obliging to all, and provoking to none, and yet he is here called a pestilent fellow, ver. 6. we have found him, *λοιμὸν, pestem*, the plague of the nation, a walking pestilence, which supposeth him to be a man of a turbulent spirit, malicious and ill-natured, and one that threw all things into disorder wherever he came. They would have it thought that he had done more mischief in his time than a plague could do: That the mischief he did was spreading and infectious, and that he made others as mischievous as himself; that it was of as fatal consequence as the plague is, killing and destroying, and laying all waste; that it was as much to be dreaded and guarded against as a plague is. Many a good sermon he had preached, and many a good work he had done, and for those he is called a pestilent fellow.

2. Paul was a peace-maker, was a preacher of that gospel which has a direct tendency to *slay all enemies*, and to establish true and lasting peace; he lived peaceably and quietly himself, and taught others to do so too, and yet is here represented as a mover of sedition, among all the Jews throughout the world. The Jews were disaffected to the Roman government those of them that were most bigotted were most so. This Felix knew, and had therefore a watchful eye upon them, now they would fain make him believe that this Paul was the man that made them so, whereas they themselves were the men that sowed the seeds of faction and sedition among them, and they knew it, and the reason why they hated Christ and his religion, was, because he did not go about to head them in an opposition to the Romans. The Jews were every where much set against Paul, and stirred up the people to clamour against him, they moved sedition in all places where he came, and then cast the blame unjustly upon him, as if he had been the mover of the sedition; as Nero not long after set Rome on fire, and then said they were the Christians that did it.

3. Paul was a man of catholic charity, that did not affect to be singular, but made himself the servant of all for their good, and yet he is there charged to be a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; a standard-bearer of that sect, so the word signifies. Cyprrian when condemned to die for being a Christian, this was inserted in his sentence, that he was *auctor iniqui nominis & signifer*. Now it was true that Paul was an active leading man in propagating Christianity. But, 1. It was utterly false that that was a sect; he did not draw people to a party, or private opinion, nor did he make his own opinions their rule. True Christianity establishes that which is of common concern to all mankind, publisheth goodwill to men, and shews us God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and therefore cannot be thought to take its rise from such narrow opinions, and private interests as sects owe their original to. True Christianity has a direct tendency to the uniting of the children of men, and the gathering of them together in one; and as far as it obtains its just power and influence upon the minds of men, will make them meek and quiet, and peaceable and loving, and every way easy and acceptable, and profitable one to another, and therefore is far from being a sect, which is supposed to lead to division, and sow discord. True Christianity aims at no worldly benefit or advantage, and therefore must by no means be called a sect

sect. Those that espouse a sect, are governed in it by their secular interest, they aim at wealth or honour; but the professors of Christianity are so far from this, that they expose themselves thereby to the loss and ruin of all that is dear to them in this world. 2. It is invidiously called the sect of the Nazarenes, by which Christ was represented as of Nazareth, whence no good thing was expected to arise, whereas he was of Bethlehem, where the Messiah was to be born. Yet he was pleased to call himself, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Acts xxii. 8. And the scripture has put an honour on the name, *Mat. ii. 23.* And therefore though intended for a reproach, the Christians had no reason to be ashamed of sharing with their Master in it. 3. It was false that Paul was the author or standard-bearer of this sect; for he did not draw people to himself, but to Christ; did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus.

2. Paul had a veneration for the temple, as it had been the place God chose to put his name there, and had lately himself with reverence attended the temple-service, and yet it is here charged upon him, that he went about to *profane the temple*, and that he designedly put contempt upon it, and violated the laws of it, *ver. 6.* Their proof of this failed; for the matter of fact they alledged was utterly false, and they knew it, *chap. xxi. 29.*

2. That the *course of justice* against Paul, was obstructed by the chief captain.

1. They pleaded, that they *took him, and would have judged him according to their law.* This was false; they did not go about to judge him according to their law, but contrary to all law and equity, went about to *beat him to death, or pull him to pieces*, without hearing what he had to say for himself; went about under pretence of having him into their court, to throw him into the hands of ruffians, that lay in wait to destroy him. Was this *judging him according to their law*? It is easy for men when they know what they *should have done*, to say, that they *would have done*, when they meant nothing less.

2. They reflected upon the chief captain as having done them an injury in rescuing Paul out of their hands; whereas he therein not only did him justice, but them the greatest kindness that could be, in preventing the guilt they were bringing upon themselves. *The chief captain Lyllias came upon us, and with great violence* (but really no more than was necessary) *took him out of our hands*, *ver. 7.* See how persecutors are enraged at their disappointments, which they ought to be thankful for. When David in a heat of passion was going upon a bloody enterprize, he thanked Abigail for stopping him, and God for sending her to do it, so soon did he correct and recover himself: But these cruel men justify themselves, and reckon him their enemy who *kept them* (as David there speaks) *from staining blood with their own hands.*

3. They referred themselves to Felix and his judgment, yet seeming uneasy that they were under a necessity of doing so, the chief captain having obliged them to it, *ver. 8.* It was he that forced us to give your excellency this trouble, and ourselves too; for, 1. He *commanded his accusers to come to thee*, that thou mightest hear the charge, when it might as well have been ended in the inferior court. 2. He has left it to thee to examine him, and try what thou canst get out of him, and whether thou canst by his confession come to the knowledge of those things which we lay to his charge.

Thirdly, The assent of the Jews to this charge which Tertullus exhibited, *ver. 9.* *They confirmed it, saying, that those things were so.*

1. Some think this speaks the proof of their charge by witnesses upon oath, that were examined as to the particulars of it, and attested them. And no wonder, if when they had found an orator that would *say it*, they found witnesses that would *swear it*, for money.

2. It rather seems to intimate the approbation which the high priest and the elders gave to what Tertullus said. Felix asked them is this your sense, and is it all that you have to say? And they answered, yes, it was; and so they made themselves guilty of all the falsehood that was in his speech. Those that have not the wit and parts to do mischief with, that some others have; that cannot make speeches, and hold disputes against religion, yet make themselves guilty of the mischief that others do, by assenting to that which others do, and saying, *those things are so*, repeating, and standing by what is said, to *pervert the right ways of the Lord.* Many that have not learning enough to plead for Baal, yet have wickedness enough to vote for Baal.

10. Then Paul, after that the governour had beckened unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for my self: 11. Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city. 13. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. 14. But

this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets: 15. And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16. And herein do I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. 17. Now after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. 18. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. 19. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. 20. Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil-doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21. Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day.

We have here Paul's defence of himself in answer to Tertullus's charge, and there appears in it a great deal of the spirit of wisdom and holiness, and an accomplishment of Christ's promise to his followers, that when they were before governors and kings for his sake, it should be *given them in that same hour what they should speak.* Though Tertullus had said a great many provoking things, yet Paul did not interrupt him, but let him go on to the end of his speech, according to the rules of decency, and the method in courts of justice, that the plaintiff be allowed to finish his evidence before the defendant begins his plea. And when he had done, he did not presently fly out into passionate exclamations against the iniquity of the times and the men, *O tempora, O mores!* but he waited for a permission from the judge to speak in his turn, and had it. The *governor beckened to him to speak*, *ver. 10.* And now he also may have leave to *speak out*, under the protection of the governor, which was more than he could obtain yet. And when he did speak, he made no reflexions at all upon Tertullus; he knew he spoke for his fee, and therefore despised what he said, and levelled his defence against those that employed him. And here,

First, He addresseth himself very respectfully to the governor, and with a confidence that he would do him justice. Here are no such flattering compliments as Tertullus soothed him up with, but, which was more truly respectful, a profession that he *answered for himself cheerfully*, and with good assurance *before him*, looking upon him, though not as one that was his friend, yet as one that would be fair and impartial. He thus expresseth his expectation that he *would be so*, to engage him *to be so*. It was likewise the language of one that was conscious to himself of his own integrity, and whose heart did not reproach him, whoever did: He did not stand trembling at the bar, but very cheerful when he had one to be his judge that was not a party, but an indifferent person. Nay, when he considers who his judge is, he *answers the more cheerfully*; and why so? He doth not say, because I know thee to be a judge of inflexible justice and integrity, that hatest bribes, and in giving judgment *fearst God*, and *regardest not man*; for he could not justly say this of him, and therefore would not say it, though it were to gain his favour never so much; but, *I the more cheerfully answer for my self*, because *I know thou hast been many years a judge to this nation*; and that was very true. And being so,

1. He could say of his own knowledge, that there had not formerly been any complaints against Paul; such clamours as they raised, are generally against old offenders; but though he had long sitten judge there, he never had Paul brought before him yet, till now, and therefore he was not so dangerous a criminal as he was represented to be.

2. He was well acquainted with the Jewish nation, and with their temper and spirit, he knew how they were bigotted to their own way, what furious zealots they were against all that did not comply with them, how peevish and perverse they generally were, and therefore would make allowances for that in their accusation of him, and not regard that which he had reason to think came so much from party-malice. Though he did not know him, he knew his prosecutors, and by that might guess what manner of man he was.

Secondly, He denies the facts that he was charged with, upon which their character of him was grounded. *Moving sedition, and profaning the temple*, were the crimes for which he stood indicted; crimes which they knew the Roman governors did not use to enquire into, and therefore hoped that the governor would return him back to them to be judged by their law, and that was all they wished for: But Paul desires, that though he would not enquire into the crimes, he would protect one that was unjustly charged with them, from those whom he knew to be spiteful and ill-natured enough. Now he would have him to understand, and what he said, he was ready, if required, to make out by witnesses.

1. That he came up to Jerusalem on purpose to worship God in peace and holiness, so far was he from any design to *move sedition among the people*, or to *profane the temple*. He came to keep up his communion with the Jews, not to put any affront upon them.

2. That it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem, and he had been six days a prisoner; he was alone, and it could not be supposed that in so short a time he could do the mischief they charged upon him. And as for what he had done in other countries, they knew nothing of it, but by uncertain report, by which the matter was very unfairly represented.

3. That he had demeaned himself at Jerusalem very quietly and peaceably, and had made no manner of stir. If it had been true what they alledged, that he was a *mover of sedition among all the Jews*; surely he would have been industrious to make a party at Jerusalem: but he did not do so. He was in the temple attending the publick service there; he was in the synagogues where the law was read and opened; he went about in the city among his relations and friends, and conversed freely in their places of concourse, and he was a man of a great genius, and an active spirit; and yet they could not charge him with offering any thing either against the faith, or against the peace of the Jewish church. 1. He had nothing in him of a contradicting spirit, as the movers of sedition have; he had no disposition to quarrel or oppose; they never found him *disputing with any man*, either affronting the learned with captious cavils, or perplexing the weak and simple with curious subtleties; he was ready if asked, to *give a reason* of his own hope, and to give instruction to others, but he never picked a quarrel with any man about his religion, nor made that the subject of debate and controversy, and perverse dispute, which ought always to be treated of with humility and reverence, with meekness and love. 2. He had nothing in himself of a turbulent spirit; they never found me *raising up the people*, by incensing them against their governors in church or state, or suggesting to them fears and jealousies concerning publick affairs; or by setting them at variance one with another, or sowing discord among them. He carried it as became a Christian and a minister, with love and quietness, and due subjection to lawful authority. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, nor did he ever mention or think of such a thing as taking up arms for the propagating of the gospel, or the defence of the preachers of it; though he could have made, perhaps, as strong a party among the common people as his adversaries, yet he never attempted it.

4. That as to what they had charged him with, of *moving sedition* in other countries, he was wholly innocent, and they could not make good the charge, *ver. 13. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me*. Hereby, 1. He maintains his own innocency; for when he saith, they *cannot prove* it, he means *the matter is not so*. He was no enemy to the publick peace, he had done no real prejudice, but a great deal of real service, and would gladly have done more to the nation of the Jews: And was so far from having any antipathy to them, that he had the strongest affection imaginable for them, and a most passionate desire of their welfare, *Rom. ix. 1, 2*. 2. He bemoans his own calamity, that he was accused of those things which could not be proved against him. And it has often been the lot of very worthy good men to be thus injured, to have things laid to their charge which they are at the greatest distance from, and abhor the thought of. But while they are lamenting this calamity, this may be their rejoicing, even the *testimony of their consciences* concerning their integrity. 3. He *shews the iniquity of his prosecutors*, who said that which they knew they could not prove, and thereby did him wrong in his name, liberty, and life, and did the judge wrong too in imposing upon him, and doing what in them lay to pervert his judgment. 4. He *appeals to the equity of his judge*, and awakens him to look about him that he might not be drawn into a snare by the violence of the prosecution. The judge must give sentence *secundum allegata & probata*, according to that which is not only alledged, but proved, and therefore must *enquire and make search and ask diligently, whether the thing be true and certain*, *Deut. xiii. 14*. he cannot otherwise give a right judgment.

Thirdly, He gives a fair and just account of himself, which doth at once both clear him from crime, and likewise intimate what was the true reason of their violence in prosecuting him.

1. He acknowledges himself to be one whom they looked upon as an heretick, and that was the reason of their spleen against him. The chief captain had observed, and the governor now cannot but observe an uncommon violence and fury in his prosecutors, which they know not what to make of, but guessing at the crime by the cry, conclude he must needs have been a very ill man, only for that reason; now Paul here unriddles the matter, I confess, that *in the way which they call heresy, or a sect, so worship I the God of my fathers*. The controversy is in a matter of religion, and such controversies are commonly managed with most fury and violence. Note, It is no new thing for the right way of worshipping God to be called heresy; and for the best of God's servants to be stigmatized and run down as sectaries. The reformed churches are called heretical ones by those who themselves *bate to be reformed*, and are themselves hereticks. Let us therefore never be driven off from any good way, by its being put into an ill name; for true and

pure Christianity is never the worse, nor to be the worse thought of for its being *called heresy*; no, not though it be called so by the *high priest and the elders*.

2. He vindicates himself from this imputation; they call Paul a heretick, but he is not so; for,

1. He *worships the God of his fathers*, and therefore is right in the object of his worship; he doth not say, *let us go after other gods, which we have not known, and let us serve them*, as the false prophet is supposed to do, *Deut. xiii. 2*. If so, they might justly call his way heresy, a *drawing of them aside* into a by-path, and a dangerous one; but he worships the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not only the God whom they worshipped, but the God that took them into covenant with himself, and was and would be called *their God*. Paul adheres to *that covenant*, and sets up no other in opposition to it. The *promise made unto the fathers*, Paul preached as *fulfilled to the children*, *Acts xiii. 32, 33*. and so directed both his own and others devotions to God, as the *God of their fathers*. He also refers to the practice of all his pious ancestors; *I worship the same God that all my fathers worshipped*; his religion was so far from being chargeable with novelty, that it gloried in its antiquity: and in an uninterrupted succession of its professors. Note, It is very comfortable in our worshipping God, to have an eye to him as the *God of our fathers*. Our fathers trusted in him, and were owned by him, and he engaged to be *their God*, and the *God of their seed*. He approved himself *theirs*, and therefore if we serve him, as they did, he will be ours; what an emphasis is laid upon that, *he is my father's God, and I will exalt him*, *Exod. xv. 2*.

2. He *believes all things which are written in the law and the prophets*, and therefore is right in the rule of his worship; his religion is grounded upon, and governed by the holy scriptures; they are his oracle, and touchstone, and he speaks and acts according to them. He receives the scriptures *entire*, and believes *all things* that are there written; and he receives them *pure*, for he *saith no other things* but what are contained in them; as he explains himself, *chap. xxvi. 22*. He sets not up any other rule of faith or practice but the scriptures, not tradition, not the authority of the church, or the infallibility of any man or company of men on earth, not the light within, or human reason, but divine revelation as it is in the scripture, is that which he resolves to live and die by, and therefore he is not a heretick.

5. He has his eye upon a future state, and is a believing expectant of thar, and therefore is right in the end of his worship. They that turn aside to heresy, have a regard to *this world*, and some secular interest, but Paul aims to make heaven of his religion, and neither more or less, *ver. 15. I have hope towards God*, all my expectation is from him, and therefore all my desire is towards him, and all my dependence upon him; my hope is towards God, and not towards the world; towards another world, and not towards this. I depend upon God and upon his power, that *there shall be a resurrection of the dead* at the end of time, of all, both the *just and unjust*; and the great thing *I aim at* in my religion is to obtain a joyful and happy resurrection, a share in the *resurrection of the just*. Observe here,

1. That there shall be a *resurrection of the dead*, the dead bodies of men, of all men from the beginning to the end of time; it is certain, not only that the soul doth not die with the body, but that the body itself shall live again; we have not only *another life* to live when our present life is at an end; but there is to be *another world*, which shall commence when this world is at an end, into which all the children of men must enter at once by a *resurrection from the dead*, as they entered into this, one after another, by their birth.

2. It shall be a resurrection *both of the just and of the unjust*; the sanctified and the unsanctified; of those that did well, and to them our Saviour has told us, that it will be a *resurrection of life*; and of those that *did evil*, and to them it will be a *resurrection of condemnation*, *John v. 29*. See *Dan. xii. 2*. This implies that it will be a resurrection to a final judgment, by which all the children of men will be determined to everlasting happiness or misery in a world of retribution, according to what they were, and what they did, in this state of probation and preparation. The just shall rise by virtue of their union with Christ as their head; the unjust shall rise by virtue of Christ's dominion over them as their judge.

3. God is to be depended upon for the resurrection of the dead; I have *hope towards God*, and *in God*, that there shall be a resurrection; it shall be effected by the almighty *power of God*, in performance of the word which God hath spoken; so that they who doubt of it, betray their ignorance both of the scriptures, and of the *power of God*, *Mat. xxii. 29*.

4. The resurrection of the dead, is a fundamental article of our creed, as it was also of that of the Jewish church; it is what *they themselves also allow*; nay, it was the expectation of the ancient patriarchs, witness Job's confession of his faith; but it is more clearly revealed, and more fully confirmed by the gospel, and therefore they who believed it, should have been thankful to the preachers of the gospel for their explications and proofs of it, instead of opposing them.

5. In all our religion we ought to have an eye to the other world, and to serve God in all instances with a confidence in

him that there will be a resurrection of the dead, doing all in preparation for that, and expecting our recompence in that.

4. His conversation is of a piece with his devotion, *ver. 16. And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.* Prophets, and their doctrine, were to be tried by their fruits. Paul was far from having made shipwreck of a good conscience, and therefore it is not likely he has made shipwreck of the faith, the mystery of which is best held in a pure conscience. This protestation of Paul's is to the same purpose with that which he made before the high priest, *chap. xxiii.*

1. *I have lived in all good conscience*; and this was his rejoicing. Observe,

1. What was Paul's aim and desire; to *have a conscience void of offence.* Either, 1. A conscience not offending; not informing me wrong, or flattering me, or dealing deceitfully with me, or in any thing misleading me. Or, 2. A conscience not offended; it is like Job's resolution, *my heart shall not reproach me*, i. e. I will never give it any occasion to do so. This is what I am ambitious of, to keep upon good terms with my own conscience, that it may have no cause either to question the goodness of my spiritual state, or to quarrel with me for any particular action. I am as careful not to offend my conscience, as I am not to offend a friend whom I daily converse with; nay, as I am not to offend a magistrate whose authority I am under, and to whom I am accountable; for conscience is God's deputy in my soul.

2. What was his care and endeavour in pursuance of this; *I exercise myself, ἀσκῶ*, I make it my constant business, and govern myself by this intention, I discipline myself, and live by rule (those that did so were called asceticks, from the word here used) abstain from many a thing which my inclination leads me to, and abound in all the exercises of religion that are most spiritual, with this in my eye, that I may *keep peace with my own conscience.*

3. The extent of this care; 1. To all times; to have always a conscience void of offence, always void of *gross offence*; for though Paul was conscious to himself that he *had not yet attained perfection*, and the evil that he *would not do* yet he did; yet he was *innocent from the great transgression.* Sins of infirmity are uneasy to conscience, but they do not wound it and waste it, as presumptuous sins do, and though offence may be given to conscience, yet care must be taken that it be not an abiding offence, but that by the renewed acts of faith and repentance, the matter may be taken up again quickly. And this however we must *always exercise ourselves in*, and though we *come short*, we must *follow after.* 2. To all things; both *towards God, and towards man.* His conscientious care extended itself to the whole of his duty, and he was afraid of breaking the law of love, either to God or his neighbour; conscience, like the magistrate, is *custos utriusque tabulæ.* We must be very cautious that we do not think, or speak, or do any thing amiss either against God or man, 2. *Cor. viii. 2.*

4. The inducement to it; *herein, ἐν τούτῳ, for this cause*; so it may be read. Because I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, therefore I thus *exercise myself.* The consideration of the *future state* should engage us to be universally conscientious in our present state.

Fourthly, Having made confession of his faith, he gives a plain and faithful account of his case, and of the wrong done him by his persecutors. Twice he had been rescued by the chief captain out of the hand of the Jews, when they were ready to pull him to pieces, and he challengeth them to prove him guilty of any crime, either time.

1. In the temple; there they fell furiously upon him as an enemy to their nation, and the temple, *chap. xxi. 28.* But was there any colour for the charge? No, but evidence sufficient against it.

1. It was very hard to accuse him as an *enemy to their nation*, when after long absence from Jerusalem he came to *bring alms to his nation*, money which (though he had need enough himself of, yet) he had collected among his friends, for the relief of the poor at Jerusalem: He not only had no malice to that people, but he had a very charitable concern for them, and was ready to do them all good offices; and were they his *adversaries for his love*? *Psal. cix. 4.* 2. It was very hard to accuse him of having profaned the temple, when he brought offerings to the temple, and was himself at charges therein, *chap. xxi. 24.* and was found *purifying himself in the temple*, according to the law, *ver. 18.* And that in a very quiet decent manner, *neither with multitude, nor with tumult*; though he was a man so much talked of, he was far from coveting to shew himself, when he came to Jerusalem, or of being crowded after; but went to the temple as much as was possible, *incognito*; they were Jews from Asia, his enemies, that made him to be taken notice of; they had no pretence to make a tumult and raise a multitude against him, for he had neither multitude nor tumult for him. And as for what was, perhaps, suggested to Felix, that he had brought Greeks into the temple contrary to their law, and the governor ought to reckon with him for that, the Romans having stipulated with the nations that submitted to them, to preserve them in their religion, he challengeth them to prove it; *ver. 19.* Those Jews of Asia ought to have been *here before thee*, that they might have been examined, whether *they had ought against me*, that they would *stand by*, and *swear to*; for some that will not scruple to tell

a lye, have such *leavings of conscience* that they boggle at confirming it with an oath.

2. In the council; since the Jews of Asia are not here to prove any thing upon me done amiss in the temple, let *these same* that are *here*, the high priest and the elders say, whether they have found any evil doing in me, or if I were guilty of any misdemeanour, *when I stood before the council*, which was another time they were ready to pull me in pieces, *ver. 20.* When I was there they could not take offence at any thing I said; for all I said was, *touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day*, *ver. 21.* which gave no offence to any but the Sadducees. This, I hope, was no crime that I stuck to that which is the faith of the whole Jewish church, excepting those whom they themselves call hereticks.

22. And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that way*, he deferred them, and said, when Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister, or come unto him. 24. And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul; and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. 26. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftner, and communed with him. 27. But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix room: and Felix willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

We have here the result of Paul's trial before Felix, and what was the consequence of it.

First, Felix adjourned the cause, and took further time to consider of it, *ver. 22.* He had a more perfect knowledge of *that way* which the Jews called heresy, than the high priest and the elders thought he had; he understood something of the Christian religion; for living at Cæsarea, where Cornelius a Roman Centurion was, that was a Christian, from him and others, he had got a notion of Christianity, that it was not such an ill thing as it was represented; he himself knew some of *that way* to be honest good men, and very conscientious, and therefore he put off the prosecutors with an excuse, *when the chief captain shall come down*, hither, *I will know the uttermost of your matter*, or *I shall know the truth*, whether this Paul did go about to *raise sedition*, or no; you are parties, he is an indifferent person. Either Paul deserves to be punished for raising the tumult, or you do for doing it yourselves, and then charging it upon him; and I will hear what he saith, and determine accordingly between you. Now,

1. It was a disappointment to the high priest and the elders that Paul was not *condemned or remitted to their judgment*, which they wished for, and expected. But thus sometimes God restrains the wrath of his peoples enemies by the agency not of their friends, but of such as are strangers to them. And though they be so, if they have but some knowledge of *their way*, they cannot but appear for their protection.

2. It was an injury to Paul that he was not released; Felix ought to have *avenged him of his adversaries*, when he so plainly saw there was nothing but malice in the prosecution, and to have *ridded him out of the hand of the wicked*, according to the duty of a judge, *Psal. lxxxii. 4.* But he was a judge that neither *feared God*, nor *regarded man*, and what good could be expected from him? It is a wrong not only to deny justice, but to delay it.

Secondly, He continued the prisoner in custody, and would not take bail for him; else here at Cæsarea Paul had friends enow, that would gladly have been his security. Felix thought a man of such a publick character as Paul was, had many friends, as well as many enemies, and he might have an opportunity of obliging them, or making a hand of them, if he did not presently release him, and yet did shew him countenance; and therefore,

1. He continued him a prisoner, commanded a centurion, or captain to keep him, *ver. 23.* He did not commit him to the common jail, but being first made an army-prisoner, he shall still be so.

2. Yet he took care he should be a prisoner at large, *in libera custodia*; his keeper must let him have liberty, not bind him or lock him up, but make his confinement as easy to him as possible; let him have the liberty of the castle, and, perhaps, he means liberty to take the air, or go abroad upon his parol; and Paul was such an honest man, that they might take his word for his return. The high priest and the elders grudged him his life, but Felix generously allows him a sort of liberty; for he had not those prejudices against him

him, and his way, that they had ; he also gave orders that none of his friends should be hindered from coming to him ; the centurion must not forbid any of his acquaintance from ministering to him ; and a man's prison is as it were his own house, if he has but his friends about him.

Thirdly, He had frequent conversation with him afterwards in private, once particularly, not long after his publick trial, *ver. 24, 25.* Observe,

1. With what design *Felix sent for Paul* ; he had a mind to have some talk with him concerning faith in Christ, the Christian religion ; he had some knowledge of that way, but he desired to have an account of it from Paul, who was so celebrated a preacher of that faith above the rest. Those that would enlarge their knowledge, must discourse with men in their own profession ; and those that would be acquainted with any profession, should consult those that excel in the knowledge of it ; and therefore Felix has a mind to talk with Paul more freely than he could in open court, where he observed Paul upon his guard, concerning the faith of Christ ; and this only to satisfy his curiosity, or rather, the curiosity of his wife *Drusilla, who was a Jewess*, daughter of Herod Agrippa, that was eaten of worms ; and, being educated in the Jewish religion, she was the more inquisitive concerning the Christian religion, which pretended to be the perfection of that, and desired to hear Paul discourse of it : But it was no great matter what religion she was of, for, whatever it was, she was a reproach and scandal to it ; a Jewess, but an adulteress ; she was another man's wife when Felix took her to be his wife, and she lived with him in whoredom, and was noted for an impudent woman, yet she desires to hear concerning the faith of Christ. Many are fond of new notions and speculations in religion, and can hear and speak of them with pleasure, who yet hate to come under the power and influence of religion ; can be content to have their judgments informed, but not their lives reformed.

2. What the account was which Paul gave him of the Christian religion ; by the idea he had of it, he expected to be amused with a mystical divinity, but, as Paul represents it to him, he is alarmed with a practical divinity ; Paul being asked concerning the faith in Christ, reasoned (for Paul was always a rational preacher) concerning righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come : It is probable, he mentioned to him the peculiar doctrine of Christianity concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and his being the mediator between God and man, but he hastened to his application, in which he designed to come home to the consciences of his hearers, and he discoursed with clearness and warmth of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come ; and there he shewed,

(1.) That the faith in Christ is designed to enforce upon the children of men the great laws of justice and temperance : *The grace of God teacheth us to live soberly, and righteously*, Tit. ii. 12. Justice and temperance were celebrated virtues among the heathen moralists ; if the doctrine Paul preacheth, which Felix has heard of as proclaiming liberty, will but free him from an obligation to these, he will readily embrace it ; no, saith Paul, so far from doing so, that it strengthens the obligations of those sacred laws ; it binds all under the highest penalties to be honest in all their dealings, and render to all their due ; to deny themselves, and to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection ; the world, and the flesh, being in our baptism renounced, all our pursuits of the world, and all our gratifications of the desires of the body, are to be under the regulations of religion : Paul reasoned of righteousness and temperance, to convince Felix of his unrighteousness and intemperance, which he had been notoriously guilty of, that, seeing the odiousness of them, and his obnoxiousness to the wrath of God for them (*Eph. v. 6.*) he might enquire concerning the faith of Christ, with a resolution to embrace it.

(2.) That by the doctrine of Christ is discovered to us the judgment to come, by the sentence of which the everlasting state of all the children of men will be finally and irreversibly determined : Men have their day now, Felix hath his ; but *God's day is coming, when every one shall give account of himself to God, the Judge of all.* Paul reasoned concerning this, i. e. he shewed what reason we have to believe that there is a judgment to come, and what reason we have, in consideration thereof, to be religious.

Now, from this account of the heads of Paul's discourse, we may gather, 1. That Paul, in his preaching, had no respect of persons, for the word of God, which he preached, has not : He urgeth the same convictions and instructions upon the Roman governor, that he did upon other people. 2. That Paul, in his preaching, aimed at the consciences of men, and came close to them ; sought not to please their fancy, or gratify their curiosity, but led them to a sight of their sins, and a sense of their duty and interest. 3. That Paul preferred the serving of Christ, and the saving of souls, before his own safety. He lay at the mercy of Felix, who had power (as Pilate said) to crucify him (or, which was as bad, to deliver him back to the Jews) and he had power to release him : Now, when Paul had his ear, and had him in a good humour, he had a fair opportunity of ingratiating himself with him, and obtaining a release ; nay, and of incensing him against his prosecutors ; and, on the contrary, if he disobliged him, and put him out of humour, he may do himself a great diskindness by

it ; but he seems wholly negligent of these considerations, and is intent upon doing good, at least, discharging his duty. 4. That Paul was willing to take pains, and run hazards in his work, even there where there was little probability of doing good ; Felix and Drusilla were such hardened sinners, that it was not at all likely they should be brought to repentance by Paul's preaching, especially under such disadvantages ; and yet Paul deals with them, as one that did not despair of them : *Let the watchman give fair warning, and then they have delivered their own souls*, though they should not prevail to deliver the souls they watch for.

3. What impressions Paul's discourse made upon this great, but ill man ; Felix trembled, *ἐκφοβήθη*, being put into a fright, or made a terror to himself, a *magor-miffabib*, as Pashur, Jer. xx. 3, 4. Paul never trembled before him, but he was made to tremble before Paul. If this be so, as Paul saith, what will become of me in another world ? If the unrighteous and intemperate will be condemned in the judgment to come, I am undone, for ever undone, unless I lead a new course of life. We do not find that Drusilla trembled, though she was equally guilty, for she was a Jewess, and depended upon the ceremonial law, which she adhered to the observance of, to justify her ; but Felix, for the present, could fasten upon nothing to pacify his conscience, and therefore trembled. See here,

(1.) The power of the word of God, when it comes with commission ; it is searching, it is startling, it can strike a terror into the heart of the most proud and daring sinner, by setting his sins in order before him, and shewing him the terrors of the Lord.

(2.) The workings of natural conscience, when it is startled and awakened, it will fill the soul with horror and amazement at its own deformity and danger : Those that are themselves the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, have hereby been made a terror to themselves : A prospect of the judgment to come is enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble ; as, when it comes indeed, it will make the mighty men, and the chief captains, to call, in vain, to rocks and mountains to shelter them.

4. How Felix struggled to get clear of these impressions, and to shake off the terror of his convictions, he did by them as he did by Paul's prosecutors, *ver. 27.* he deferred them ; he said, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.* 1. He trembled, and that was all ; Paul's trembling, chap. ix. 6. and the jailor's, chap. xvi. 30. ended in their conversion, but this of Felix did not : There are many startled by the word of God, that are not effectually changed by it : Many are in fear of the consequences of sin, and yet continue in love and league with sin. 2. He did not fight against his convictions, nor fly in the face of the word, or of the preacher of it, to be revenged on them for making his conscience fly in his face ; he did not say to Paul, as Amaziah to the prophet, *Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten ?* did not threaten him with a closer confinement, or with death, for touching him, as John Baptist did Herod, in the fore place. But, 3. He artfully shifted off his convictions, by putting off the prosecution of them to another time ; he has nothing to object against what Paul hath said, it is weighty, and worth considering, but, like a sorry debtor, he begs day ; Paul hath spent himself, and has tired him, and his lady, and therefore, *Go thy way for this time, break off here, business calls me away, but when I have a convenient season, and have nothing else to do, I will call for thee*, and hear what thou hast further to say. Note, 1. Many lose all the benefit of their convictions, for want of striking while the iron is hot : If Felix, now he trembled, had but asked, as Paul and the jailor did, when they trembled, *What shall I do ?* he might have been brought to the faith of Christ, and have been a Felix indeed, happy for ever ; but, by dropping his convictions now, he lost them for ever, and himself with them. 2. In the affairs of our souls, delays are dangerous ; nothing is of more fatal consequence than mens putting off their conversion from time to time : They will repent, and turn to God, but not yet ; the matter is adjourned to some more convenient season, when such a business or affair is compassed, when they are so much elder, and then convictions cool and wear off, good purposes prove to no purpose, and they are more hardened than ever in their evil way. Felix put off this matter to a more convenient season, but we do not find that that more convenient season ever came ; for the devil cozens us of all our time, by cozening us of the present time : The present season is, without doubt, the most convenient season : Behold, now is the accepted time : To day, if ye will hear his voice.

Fourthly, After all, he continued him a prisoner, and left him so, when, two years after, he was removed from the government, *ver. 26, 27.* he was convinced in his conscience that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, and yet had not the honesty to release him : To little purpose had Paul reasoned with him about righteousness, though he then trembled at the thought of his own iniquity, who could thus persist in such a palpable piece of injustice. But here we are told what principles he was governed by herein ; and they were such as make the matter yet much worse :

1. The love of money : He would not release Paul, because he hoped to make his markets of him, and that, at length, his friends would make a purse to purchase his liberty, and then he would satisfy

tisfy his conscience by releasing him, when he could withal satisfy his covetousness by it; but he cannot find in his heart to do his duty as a judge, unless he can get money by it: *He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, or somebody for him, and then he would have loosed him, and set him at liberty; and, in hopes of that, he continues him a prisoner, and sends for him the oftner, and communes with him; not any more about the faith of Christ, he had had enough of that, and of the judgment to come, Paul must not return to those subjects, or go on with them, but about his discharge, or ransom rather, out of his present captivity: He cannot, for shame, ask Paul what he will give him to release him, but he sends for him to feel his pulse, and gives him an opportunity to ask what he would take to release him: And now we see what became of his promise, both to Paul and to himself, that he would hear more of Christ at some other convenient season; here were many seasons convenient enough to have talked that matter through, but nothing is done in it; all his business now is to get money by Paul, not to get the knowledge of Christ by him.* Note, Those that trifle with their convictions, and think they can have the grace of God at command when they please, it is just with God to say concerning them, *that his Spirit shall no more strive with them: When men will not hear God's voice, to day, while it is called to day, the heart is commonly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Paul was but a poor man himself, *silver and gold he had none*, to give to purchase his liberty, but Felix knew there were those who wished well to him that were able to assist him, he having lately collected a deal of money for the poor saints to relieve them, it might be expected that the rich saints should contribute some to release him, and I wonder it was not done: Though Paul is to be commended that he would not bid money to Felix, nor beg money of the churches, his great and generous soul disdained both, yet I know not whether his friends are to be commended, nay, whether they can be justified, in not doing it for him; they ought to have solicited the governor as pressingly for him, as his enemies did against him; and if a gift was necessary to make room for them (as Solomon speaks) and to bring them before great men, they might lawfully have brought it: I ought not to bribe a man to do an unjust thing, but if he will not do me justice without a fee, it is but doing myself justice to give it him; and if they might do it, it was a shame they did not do it; I blush for them, that they would let such an eminent and useful man as Paul lie in the jail, when a little money would have fetched him out, and restored him to his usefulness again: The Christians here at Cesarea, where he now was, had parted with their tears to prevent his going to the prison (chap. xxi. 13.) but could not find in their hearts to part with their money to help him out: Yet there might be a providence of God in it; Paul's bonds must be for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ, and therefore he must continue in bonds: However, this will not excuse Felix, who ought to have released an innocent man without demanding or accepting any thing for it; the judge that will not do right without a bribe, no doubt will do wrong for a bribe.

2. Men-pleasing: Felix was recalled from his government about two years after this, and Porcius Festus was put in his place, and one would have expected he should have at least concluded his government with this act of justice, the release of Paul, but he did not, he left Paul bound, and the reason here given is, because he was willing to do the Jews a pleasure; though he would not deliver him to death to please them, yet he would continue him a prisoner rather than offend them; and he did it in hope hereby to atone for the many offences he had done against them: He did not think Paul had either interest or inclination to complain of him at court for detaining him so long in custody, against all law and equity; but he was jealous of the high priest, and elders, that they would be his accusers to the emperor for the wrongs he had done them; and therefore hopes, by gratifying them in this matter, to stop their mouths. Thus they who do some ill things, are tempted to do more, to screen themselves, and bear them out. If Felix had not injured the Jews, he needed not to have done this to please them; but when he had done it, it seems; he did not gain his point; the Jews, notwithstanding this, accused him to the emperor, and, some historians say, he was sent bound to Rome by Festus; and if so, surely his remembering how light he had made of Paul's bonds, would help to make his own chain heavy. Those that aim to please God by doing good, will have what they aim at; but so will not they that seek to please men by doing evil.

C H A P. XXV.

Some think, that Felix was turned out, and Festus succeeded him, quickly after Paul's imprisonment, and that the two years, mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, are to be reckoned from the beginning of Nero's reign; but it seems more natural to compute it from Paul's being delivered into the hands of Felix; however, we have here much the same management of Paul's case, as we had in the foregoing chapter; cognizance is here taken of it, 1. By Festus the governor; it is brought before him by the Jews, ver. 1.—3. The hearing of it is appointed to be, not at Jerusa-

lem, as the Jews desired, but at Cesarea, ver. 4.—6. The Jews appear against Paul, and accuse him, ver. 7. but he stands upon his own innocency, ver. 8. and, to avoid the removing of the cause to Jerusalem, which he was pressed to consent to, he at length appealed to Cesar, ver. 9.—12. 2. By king Agrippa, to whom Festus relates his case, ver. 13.—21. and Agrippa desires he might have the hearing of it himself, ver. 22. The court is accordingly set, and Paul brought to the bar, ver. 23. and Festus opens the cause, ver. 24.—27. to introduce Paul's defence in the next chapter.

1. **N**OW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem. 2. Then the high priest, and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3. And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. 5. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. 6. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea, and the next day sitting in the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought. 7. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem, stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove; 8. While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cesar, have I offended any thing at all. 9. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10. Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsars judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cesar. 12. Then Festus when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? unto Cesar shalt thou go.

We use to say, New lords, new laws, new customs; but here was a new governor, and yet Paul had the same treatment with him that he had with the former, and no better; Festus, like Felix, is not so just to him as he should have been, for he doth not release him; and yet not so unjust to him as the Jews would have had him to be, for he will not condemn him to die, nor expose him to their rage. Here is,

First, The pressing instance which the high priest, and other Jews, used with the governor to persuade him to abandon Paul; for to send for him to Jerusalem, was, in effect, to abandon him.

1. See how speedy they were in their applications to Festus concerning Paul! As soon as ever he was come into the province, and had taken possession of the government, into which, probably, he was installed at Cesarea, within three days he went up to Jerusalem, to shew himself there, and presently the priests were upon him to proceed against Paul; he stayed three days at Cesarea, where Paul was a prisoner, and we do not find that in that time Paul made any application to him to release him, though, no doubt, he could have made good friends to him, that he might hope to have prevailed by; but, as soon as ever he comes up to Jerusalem, the priests are in all haste to make an interest with him against Paul. See how restless a thing malice is! Paul more patiently bears the lengthening out of his imprisonment, than his enemies do the delay of his prosecution even to the death.

2. See how spiteful they were in their application! They informed the governor against Paul, ver. 2. before he was brought upon a fair trial, that so they might, if possible, prejudice the cause with the governor, and make him a party, who was to be the judge. But this artifice, though base enough, they could not confide in; for the governor would be sure to hear him himself, and then all their informations against him would fall to the ground; and therefore they form another project, much more base, and that is, to assassinate Paul before he came upon his trial. These inhuman, hellish methods, which all the world professeth, at least, to abhor, have these persecutors recourse to, to gratify their malice against the gospel of Christ; and this too under colour of zeal for Moses: *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*

3. See how specious the pretence was: Now *the governor was himself at Jerusalem, they desired he would send for Paul thither, and try him there, which would save the prosecutors a great deal of labour, and looked most reasonable, because he was charged with having profaned the temple at Jerusalem, and it is usual for criminals to be tried in the court where the fact was committed; but that which they designed was, to way-lay him as he was brought up, and to murder him upon the road, supposing that he would not be brought up under so strong a guard as he was sent down with; or, that the officers that were to bring him up might be bribed to give them an opportunity for their wickedness.* It is said, *they desired favour against Paul*: The business of prosecutors is to demand justice against one that they suppose to be a criminal, and, if he be not proved so, it is as much justice to acquit him, as it is to condemn him if he be: But to desire favour against a prisoner, and from the judge too, who ought to be of counsel for him, is a very impudent thing! *The favour ought to be for the prisoner, in favorem vitæ, but here they desire it against him*: They will take it as a favour if the governor will but condemn Paul, though they can prove no crime upon him.

Secondly, *The governor's resolution that Paul shall take his trial at Cesarea, where he now is, ver. 4, 5.* See how he manageth the prosecutors.

1. He will not do them the kindness to send for him to Jerusalem; no, he gave orders that Paul should be kept at Cesarea. It doth not appear that he had any suspicion, much less any certain information, of their bloody design to murder him by the way, as the chief captain had when he sent him to Cesarea, chap. xxiii. 30. but, perhaps, he was not willing so far to oblige the high priest, and his party; or he would maintain the honour of his court at Cesarea, and require their attendance there; or he was not willing to be at the trouble or charge of bringing Paul up; whatever was his reason for refusing it, God made use of it as a means of preserving Paul out of the hands of his enemies: Perhaps, now they were more careful to keep their conspiracy secret, than they had been before, that the discovery of it might not be now, as it was then, the defeat of it: But though God doth not as then bring it to light, yet he finds another way as effectual to bring it to nought, by inclining the heart of the governor, for some other reasons, not to remove Paul to Jerusalem: God is not tied to one method in working out salvation for his people; he can suffer the designs against them to be concealed, and yet not suffer them to be accomplished; and can make even the carnal policies of great men to serve his gracious purposes.

2. Yet he will do them the justice to hear what they have to say against Paul, if they will go down to Cesarea, and appear against him there. *Let them among you which are able, able in body and purse for such a journey, or able in mind and tongue to manage the prosecution; let those among you, that are fit to be managers, go down with me, and accuse this man; or, those that are competent witnesses, that are able to prove any thing criminal upon him, let them go and give in their evidence, if there be any such wickedness in him, as you charge upon him*: Festus will not take it for granted, as they desire he should, that there is wickedness in him, till it is proved upon him, and he has been heard in his own defence; but if he be guilty, it lies upon them to prove him so.

Thirdly, Paul's trial before Festus; he stayed at Jerusalem about ten days, and then went down to Cesarea, and the prosecutors, it is likely, in his retinue; for he said, they should go down with him; and since they are so eager in the prosecution, he is willing this cause should be first called; and, that they may hasten home, he will dispatch it the next day. Expedition in administering justice is very commendable, provided more haste be not made than good speed. Now here we have,

1. The court set, and the prisoner called to the bar; Festus sat in the judgment-seat, as he used to do when any cause was brought before him that was of consequence, and he commanded Paul to be brought, and make his appearance, ver. 6. Christ, to encourage his disciples, and keep up their spirits, under such awful trials of their courage, as this was to Paul, promised them, that the day should come when they should sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.

2. The prosecutors exhibiting their charge against the prisoner, ver. 7. *The Jews stood round about, which intimates, that they were many; Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! that they were unanimous, they stood by one another, and resolved to hold together; and that they were intent upon the prosecution, and eager in clamouring against Paul; they stood round about, if possible, to frighten the judge into a compliance with their malicious design; however, to frighten the prisoner, and, at least, to put him out of countenance; but in vain; he had too just and strong an assurance, to be dashed by them: They compassed me about like bees, but they are quenched as the fire of thorns, Psalm cxviii. 12. When they stood round him, they brought many and grievous accusations against Paul, so it should be read; they charged him with high crimes and misdemeanors; the articles of impeachment were many, and contained things of a very heinous nature; they represented him to the court as black and odious as*

their wit and malice could contrive; but when they had opened the cause as they thought fit, and come to the evidence, there they failed, *they could not prove what they alledged against him, for it was all false, and the complaints groundless and unjust; either the fact was not as they opened it, or there was no fault in it; they laid to his charge things that he knew not, nor they neither.* It is no new thing for the most excellent ones of the earth to have all manner of evil said against them falsely, not only in the song of the drunkards, and upon the seat of the scornful, but even before the judgment-seat.

3. The prisoner's insisting upon his own vindication, ver. 8. Whoever reproacheth him, his own heart doth not, and therefore his own tongue shall not; though he die, he will not remove his integrity from him. When it came to his turn to speak for himself, he insisted upon this general plea, not guilty; Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor yet against Cesar, have I offended any thing at all. 1. He had not violated the law of the Jews, nor taught any doctrine destructive of it. Did he make void the law by faith? No, he established the law, Preaching Christ, the end of the law, was no offence against the law. 2. He had not profaned the temple, nor put any contempt at all upon the temple service; his helping to set up the gospel temple, did not at all offend against that temple, which was a type of it. 3. He had not offended against Cesar, or his government: By this it appears, that, now his cause was brought before the government, to curry favour with the governor, and that they might seem friends to Cesar, they had charged him with some instances of disaffection to the present higher powers, which obliged him to purge himself as to that matter, and to protest that he was no enemy to Cesar, not so much as they were, that charged him with being so.

Fourthly, Paul's appeal to the emperor, and the occasion of it; this gave the cause a new turn; whether he had before designed it, or whether it was a sudden resolve upon the present provocation, doth not appear; but God puts it into his heart to do it, for the bringing about of that which he had said to him, that he must bear witness to Christ at Rome, for there the emperor's court was, chap. xxiii. 11. We have here,

1. The proposal which Festus made to Paul, to go and take his trial at Jerusalem, ver. 9. Festus was willing to do the Jews a pleasure, inclined to gratify the prosecutors, rather than the prisoner, as far as he could go with safety against one that was a citizen of Rome, and therefore asked him, whether he would be willing to go up to Jerusalem, and clear himself there, where he had been accused, and where he might have his witnesses ready to vouch for him, and confirm what he said: He would not offer to turn him over to the high priest, and the Sanhedrin, as the Jews would have had him; but, *Wilt thou go thither, and be judged of these things before me?* The president, if he had pleased, might have ordered him thither, but he would not do it without his own consent, which, if he could have wheedled him to give, would have taken off the odium of it. In suffering times the prudence of the Lord's people is tried as well as their patience, being sent forth therefore as sheep in the midst of wolves, they have need to be wise as serpents.

2. Paul's refusal to consent to it, and his reasons for it: He knew, if he were removed to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of the president, the Jews would find some means or other to be the death of him; and therefore desires to be excused, and pleads,

(1.) That, as a citizen of Rome, it was most proper for him to be tried, not only by the president, but in that which was properly his court, which sat at Cesarea; *I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged, in the city which is the metropolis of the province.* The court being held in Cesar's name, and by his authority and commission, before one that was delegated by him, it might well be said to be his judgment-seat, as, with us, all writs run in the name of the sovereign, in whose name all courts are held. Paul's owning that he ought to be judged at Cesar's judgment-seat, plainly proves, that Christ's ministers are not exempted from the jurisdiction of the civil powers, but ought to be subject to them, as far as they can with a good conscience; and, if they be guilty of a real crime, to submit to their censure; if innocent, yet to submit to their enquiry, and to clear themselves before them.

(2.) That, as a member of the Jewish nation, he had done nothing to make himself obnoxious to them; *to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.* It very well becomes those that are innocent to plead their innocency, and to insist upon it; it is a debt we owe to our own good name, not only not to bear false witness against ourselves, but maintain our own integrity against those who bear false witness against us.

(3.) That he was willing to abide by the rules of the law, and to let that take its course, ver. 11. *If he be guilty of any capital crime that deserves death, he will not offer, either to make resistance, or to make his escape; will neither flee from justice, nor fight with it; I refuse not to die, but will accept of the punishment of mine iniquity*: Not that all who have committed any thing worthy of death, are obliged to accuse themselves, and offer themselves to justice, but when they are accused, and brought to justice, they

ought to submit, and to say, both God and the government is righteous; it is necessary that some should be made examples.

But if he be innocent, as he protests he is, *if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me*, if the prosecution be malicious, and they are resolved to have my blood, right or wrong, *no man may deliver me unto them*, no, not the governor himself, without palpable injustice; for it is his business as much to protect the innocent, as to punish the guilty; and he claims his protection.

3. His appealing to court; since he is continually in danger of the Jews, and one attempt is made after another to get him into their hands, *whose tender mercies were cruel*, he flies to the *dermier resort*, the last refuge of oppressed innocency, and takes sanctuary there, since he cannot have justice done him in any other way, *I appeal unto Cesar*. Rather than be delivered to the Jews, which Felix seems inclined to consent to, let me be delivered to Nero. When David had divers times narrowly escaped the rage of Saul, and concluded he was such a restless enemy that he should *one day perish by his hands*, he came to this resolution, being in a manner compelled to it, *There is nothing better for me than to take shelter in the land of the Philistines*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. so Paul here. But it is a hard case that a son of Abraham must be forced to appeal to a Philistine, to a Nero, from those who call themselves the seed of Abraham; and shall be safer in Gath, or Rome, than in Jerusalem! *How is the faithful city become a harlot!*

Fifthly, The judgment given upon the whole matter: Paul is neither released nor condemned, his enemies hoped the cause would be ended in his death, his friends hoped it would be ended in his deliverance, but it proves neither so nor so, they are both disappointed, the thing is left as it was: And it is an instance of the slow steps which providence sometimes takes, not bringing things to an issue so soon as we expect, by which we are often made ashamed both of our hopes, and of our fears, and are kept still waiting on God. The cause had before been adjourned to another time, now to another place, to another court, that Paul's tribulation might work patience.

1. The president advises upon the matter; *he conferred with the council*, μετὰ τῶ συμβουλίου, not with the council of the Jews, that is called, συνέδριον, but with his own counsellors, that were always ready to assist the governor with their advice: *In multitude of counsellors there is safety*; and judges should consult both with themselves and others before they pass sentence.

2. He determines to send him to Rome; some think, Paul meant not an appeal to Cesar's person, but only to his court, the sentence of which he would abide by, rather than be remitted to the Jews council, and that Festus might have chosen whether he would have sent him to Rome, or, at least, whether he would have joined issue with him upon the appeal; but, it should seem, by what Agrippa said, chap. xxvi. 32. *he might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Cesar*, that, by the course of the Roman law, a Roman citizen might appeal at any time to a superior court, even to the supreme, as causes with us are removed by certiorari, and criminals by habeas corpus, and as appeals are often made to the house of peers: Festus therefore, either of choice, or of course, comes to this resolution: *Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? unto Cesar thou shalt go*. He found there was something very extraordinary in the case, which he was therefore afraid of giving judgment upon, either one way or other; and the knowledge of which he thought would be an entertainment to the emperor, and therefore he transmitted it to his cognizance. In our judgment before God, those that, by justifying themselves, *appeal to the law, to the law they shall go*, and it will condemn them; but those that, by repentance and faith, *appeal to the gospel, to the gospel they shall go*, and it will save them.

13. And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea to salute Festus. 14. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Pauls cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: 15. About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. 16. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused, have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17. Therefore when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and I commanded the man to be brought forth. 18. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: 19. But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to

Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar. 22. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. 23. And on the morrow when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entred into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus commandment Paul was brought forth. 24. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, O king Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

We have here the preparation that was made for another hearing of Paul before king Agrippa, not in order to his giving judgment upon him, but in order to his giving advice concerning him, or rather, only to gratify his curiosity. Christ had said, concerning his followers, *that they should be brought before governors and kings*; in the former part of this chapter Paul was brought before Festus the governor, here before Agrippa the king, for a testimony to both. Here is,

First, The kind and friendly visit which king Agrippa made to Festus, now upon his coming into the government in that province, ver. 13. *After certain days, king Agrippa came to Cesarea*. Here is a royal visit; kings use to think it enough to send their ambassadors to congratulate their friends, but here was a king that came himself, that made the majesty of a prince yield to the satisfaction of a friend; for personal converse is the most pleasant among friends. Observe,

1. Who the visitants were; (1.) King Agrippa, the son of that Herod (surnamed Agrippa) who killed James the apostle, and was himself eaten of worms, and great grandson of Herod the great, under whom Christ was born: Josephus calls this Agrippa the younger; Claudius the emperor made him king of Chalcis, and tetrarch of Trachonitis and Abylene, mentioned Luke iii. 1. The Jewish writers speak of him, and (as Dr. Lightfoot tells us) among other things relate this story of him, "That reading the law publicly, in the latter end of the year of release, as was enjoined, the king, when he came to those words, Deut. xvii. 15. *Thou shalt not set a stranger king over thee, which is not of thy brethren*, the tears ran down his cheeks, for he was not of the seed of Israel, which the congregation observing, cried out, *Be of good comfort, king Agrippa, thou art our brother*; for he was of their religion, though not of their blood." (2.) Bernice came with him, she was his own sister, now a widow, the widow of his uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, after whose death she lived with this brother of hers, who was suspected to be too familiar with her, and after she was a second time married to Polemon king of Cilicia, she got to be divorced from him, and returned to her brother king Agrippa. Juvenal, Sat. vi. speaks of a diamond ring which Agrippa gave to Bernice, his incestuous sister, *Hunc dedit olim Barbarus incestæ dedit hunc Agrippa sorori*, — and names here *Beronices in digito factus pretiosior*: And both Tacitus and Suetonius speak of a criminal intimacy afterwards between her and Titus Vespasian. Drusilla, the wife of Felix, was another sister. Such lewd people were the great people generally in those times! *Say not that the former days were better*.

2. What the design of the visit was; they came to salute Festus, to give him joy of his new promotion, and to wish him joy in it; they came to compliment him upon his accession to the government, and to keep up a good correspondence with him, that Agrippa, who had the government of Galilee, might act in concert with Festus, who had the government of Judea; but, it is probable, they came as much to divert themselves, as to shew respect to him, and to share in the entertainments of his court, and to shew their fine clothes, which would do vain people no good, if they did not go abroad.

Secondly, The account which Festus gave to king Agrippa of Paul, and his case; which he gave,

1. To entertain him, and give him some diversion; it was a very remarkable story, and worth any man's hearing, not only as it was surprizing and entertaining, but, if it were truly and fully told, very instructive and edifying; and it would be particularly acceptable to Agrippa, not only because he was a judge, and there were some points of law and practice in it well worth his notice, but

but much more as he was a Jew, and there were some points of religion in it much more deserving his cognizance.

2. To have his advice; Festus was but newly come to be a judge, at least to be a judge in these parts, and therefore is diffident of himself, and of his own ability, and willing to have the counsel of those that were older and more experienced, especially in a matter that had so much difficulty in it, as Paul's case seemed to have, and therefore he declared it to the king.

Let us now see the particular account he gives to king Agrippa concerning Paul, ver. 14, 21.

1. That he found him a prisoner when he came into the government of this province; and therefore could not of his own knowledge give an account of his cause from the beginning. *There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix*: and therefore if there were any thing amiss in the first taking of him into custody, Festus is not to answer for that, for he found him in bonds. When Felix to do the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound, though he knew him to be innocent, he knew not what he did, knew not but he might have fallen into worse hands than he did fall into, though they were none of the best.

2. That the Jewish Sanhedrin were extremely set against him; the chief priests and the elders informed me against him as a dangerous man, and not fit to live, and desired he might therefore be condemned to die: These being great pretenders to religion, and therefore to be supposed men of honour and honesty, Festus thinks he ought to give credit to; but Agrippa knows them better than he doth, and therefore he desires his advice in the matter.

3. That he had insisted upon the Roman law in favour of the prisoner, and would not condemn him unheard, ver. 16. *It is not the manner of the Romans*, who herein govern themselves by the law of nature, and the fundamental rules of justice, to deliver any man to die, to grant him to destruction, so the word is, to gratify his enemies with his destruction, before the accused has the accusers face to face, to confront their testimony, and have both licence and time given him to answer for himself. He seems to upbraid them as if they reflected upon the Romans and their government in asking such a thing, or expecting that they would condemn a man without trying him; no, saith he, I would have you to know, wherever you may allow of among yourselves, the Romans allow not of such a piece of injustice among them. *Audi & alteram partem*, was become a proverb among them; hear the other side. This rule we ought to be governed by in our private censures, in common conversation; we must not give men ill characters, nor condemn their words and actions till we have heard what is to be said in their vindication. See John vii. 51.

4. That he had brought him upon his trial, according to the duty of his place, ver. 17. That he had been expeditious in it, and the prosecutors had no reason to complain of his being dilatory, for as soon as ever they were come, and we are sure they lost no time, without any delay, on the morrow, he had brought on the cause. He had likewise tried him in the most solemn manner; he sat on the judgment-seat, as they used to do in weightier causes, while those that were of small moment, they judged *de plano*, upon even ground. He called a great court on purpose for the trial of Paul, that the sentence might be definitive, and the cause ended.

5. That he was extremely disappointed in the charge they brought against him, ver. 18, 19. When the accusers stood up against him, and opened their indictment, they brought none accusations of such things as I supposed: He supposed by the eagerness of their prosecution, and their urging of it thus upon the Roman governors one after another, 1. That they had something to accuse him of that was dangerous either to private property, or the publick peace; that they would undertake to prove him a robber, or a murderer, or a rebel against the Roman power; that he had been in arms to head a sedition; that if he were not that Egyptian who lately made an uproar, and commanded a party of cut-throats, as the chief captain supposed him to be, yet that he was one of the same kidney. Such were the outcries against the primitive Christians, so loud, so fierce, that the standers-by, who judged of them by those outcries, could not but conclude them the worst of men; and to represent them so, was the design of that clamour, as it was against our Saviour. 2. That they had something to accuse him of that was conusable in the Roman courts, and which the governor was properly the judge of, as Gallio expected, Acts xviii. 14. otherwise it was absurd and ridiculous to trouble him with it, and really an affront to him.

But to his great surprize, he finds the matter is neither so nor so; they had certain questions against him, instead of proofs and evidences against him; the worst they had to say against him, was disputable whether it was a crime or no; moot-points, that would bear an endless debate, but had no tendency to fasten any guilt upon him; questions fitter for the schools than for the judgment-seat. And they were questions of their own superstition, so he calls their religion; or rather, so he calls that part of their religion which Paul was charged with doing damage to. The Romans protected their religion according to their law, but not their superstition, not the tradition of their elders. But the great question it, seems, was concerning one Jesus that was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Some think the superstition he

speaks of was the Christian religion, which Paul preached, and that he had the same notion of it that the Athenians had, that it was the introducing of a new *dæmon*, even Jesus. See how slightly this Roman speaks of Christ, and of his death and resurrection, and of the great controversy between the Jews and the Christians, whether he were the Messiah promised, or no; and the great proof of his being the Messiah, his resurrection from the dead, as if it were no more but this, there was one Jesus that was dead, and Paul affirmed, he was alive. In many causes issue is joined upon this question, whether such a person that has been long absent be living, or dead, and proofs are brought on both sides; and Festus will have it thought that this is a matter of no more moment. Whereas this Jesus, whom he prides himself in being thus ignorant of, as if he were below his notice, is he that was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death, Rev. i. 18. What Paul affirmed concerning Jesus, that he is alive, is a truth of such vast importance, that if it be not true, we are all undone.

6. That therefore he had moved it to Paul, that the cause might be adjourned to the Jewish courts, as best able to take cognizance of an affair of this nature, ver. 20. *Because I doubted of such manner of questions*, and thought myself unfit to judge of things I did not understand, I asked him, whether he would go to Jerusalem, appear before the great Sanhedrin, and there be judged of these matters? He would not force him to it, but should be glad he would consent to it, that he might not have his conscience burthened with a cause of this nature.

7. That Paul had chosen rather to remove his cause to Rome than to Jerusalem, as expecting fairer play from the emperor than from the priests. He appealed to be reserved to the hearing of Augustus, ver. 21. having no other way to stop proceedings here in this court; and therefore I have commanded him to be kept a close prisoner, till I might send him to Cesar; for I did not see cause to refuse his appeal, but rather was pleased with it.

Thirdly, The bringing of him before Agrippa, that he might have the hearing of his cause.

1. The king desired it, ver. 22. I thank you for your account of him; but I would also hear the man myself; Agrippa knows more of this matter than Festus doth of the cause, and of the person; he has heard of Paul, and knows of what vast concern this question is, which Festus makes such a jest of, whether Jesus be alive or no? And nothing would oblige him more than to hear Paul. Many great men think it below them to take cognizance of the matters of religion, except they can hear them like themselves, in the judgment-seat. Agrippa would not for all the world have gone to a meeting to hear Paul preach, no more than Herod to hear Jesus: and yet are both glad to have them brought before them, only to satisfy their curiosity. Perhaps, Agrippa desired to hear himself, that he might be in a capacity to do him a kindness, and yet did him none, only put some credit upon him.

2. Festus granted it; to morrow thou shalt hear him. There was a good providence in this for the encouragement of Paul, who seemed buried alive in his imprisonment, and deprived of all opportunities of doing good; we know not of any of his epistles that bore date from his prison at Cesarea; what opportunity he had of doing good to his friends that visited him, and perhaps, to a little congregation of them that might visit him every Lord's day, was but a low and narrow sphere of usefulness, so that seemed to be thrown by as a despised broken vessel in which there was no pleasure; but this gives him an opportunity of preaching Christ to a great congregation, and (which is more) to a congregation of great ones. Felix heard him in private concerning the faith of Christ: But Agrippa and Festus agree he shall be heard in publick. And we have reason to think, that his sermon in the next chapter, though it might not be so instrumental as some other of his sermons for the conversion of souls, yet redounded as much to the honour of Christ and Christianity as any sermon he ever preachd in his life.

3. Great preparation was made for it, ver. 23. The next day there was a great appearance in the place of hearing, Paul and his cause being much talked of, and the more for their being much talked against.

1. Agrippa and Bernice took this opportunity to shew themselves in state, and to make a figure, and perhaps, for that end desired the occasion, that they might see and be seen; for they came with great pomp; richly dressed with gold and pearl, and costly array; with a great retinue of footmen in rich liveries which made a splendid shew, and dazzled the eyes of the gazing croud. They came μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας, with great fancy, so the word is. Note, Great pomp, is but great fancy, it neither adds any real excellency, nor gains any real respects, but feeds a vain humour, which wise men would rather mortify than gratify. It is but a shew, a dream, a fantastical thing, so the word signifies, superficial, and it passeth away. And the pomp of this appearance, would put one for ever out of conceit with pomp, when the pomp which Agrippa and Bernice appeared in, was, 1. Stained by their lewd characters, and all the beauty of it sullied, and all virtuous people that knew them could not but condemn them in the midst of all this pomp, as vile persons, Psal. xv. 4. 2. Outshone by the real glory of the poor

prisoner at the bar ; what was the honour of their fine clothes, compared with that of his wisdom, and grace, and holiness ; his courage and constancy in suffering for Christ ! His bonds in so good a cause, were more glorious than their *chains of gold* ; and his guards than their equipage. Who would be fond of worldly pomp, that here sees so ill a woman *loaded with it*, and so good a man loaded with the reverse of it ?

2. The *chief captain* and *principal men of the city* took this opportunity to pay their respects to Festus and to his guests ; it answered the end of a ball at court, it brought the fine folks together in their fine clothes, and served for an entertainment. It is probable, Festus sent Paul notice of it over night, to be ready for a hearing the next morning before Agrippa : And such confidence had Paul in the promise of Christ, that it should be *given him in that same hour what he should speak*, that he complained not of the short warning, nor was put into confusion by it. And I am apt to think, they that were to appear in pomp, perplexed themselves more with care about *their clothes*, than Paul that was to appear as a prisoner did with care about his cause ; for he knew whom he had believed, and who stood by him.

Fourthly, The speech with which Festus introduced the cause, when the court, or rather, the audience was set ; which is much to the same purpose with the account he had just now given to Agrippa.

1. He addresseth himself respectfully to the company ; *king Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us*. He speaks to all the men, *ἀνδρες ἀνδρες*, as if he intended a tacit reflexion upon Bernice, a woman, for appearing in a meeting of this nature ; he doth not refer any thing to her judgment, or desire her counsel ; but *all you that are present, that are men*, (so the words are placed) I desire you to take cognizance of this matter. The word used is that which signifies men in distinction from women ; what had Bernice to do here ?

2. He represents the prisoner as one that the Jews had a very great spite against ; not only the rulers, but *the multitude of them, both at Jerusalem, and here at Cesarea*, cry out, *that he ought not to live any longer*, for they think he has lived too long already ; and if he lived any longer it would be to do more mischief. They could not charge him with any capital crime, but they want to have him out of the way.

3. He confesseth the prisoner's innocency ; and it was much for the honour of Paul and his bonds, that he had such a publick acknowledgment as this from the mouth of his judge, *ver. 25. I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death* ; upon a full hearing of the cause, it appeared that there was no evidence at all to support the indictment ; and therefore though he was inclinable enough to favour the prosecutors, yet his own conscience brought in Paul, *not guilty*. And why did he not discharge him then, for he stood upon his deliverance ? why truly, because he was so much clamoured against, and he feared the clamour would turn upon himself if he should release him : It is pity but every man that has a conscience, should have courage to act according to it. Or, perhaps, because there was *so much smoke*, he concluded there could not but be some fire, which would appear at last, and he would continue him a prisoner in expectation of it.

4. He acquaints them with the present state of the case ; that the prisoner had *appealed to the emperor* himself ; whereby he put an honour upon his own cause, as knowing it not unworthy the cognizance of the greatest of men. And that he had admitted his appeal ; *I have determined to send him*. And thus the cause now stood.

5. He desires their assistance in examining the matter, calmly and impartially, now there was no danger of their being interrupted, as he had been with the noisiness and outrage of the prosecutors ; that he might have at least such an insight into the cause as was necessary to his stating of it to the emperor, *ver. 26, 27. 1. He thought it unreasonable to send a prisoner*, especially so far as Rome, *and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him*, that the matter might be prepared as much as possible, and put in a readiness for the emperor's determination ; for he is supposed to be a man of great business, and therefore every affair must be laid before him in as little compass as possible. 2. He could not as yet write *anything certain* concerning Paul ; so confused were the informations that were given in against him, and so inconsistent, that he could make nothing at all of them. He therefore desired he might be thus publicly examined, that he might be advised by them what to write. See what a great deal of trouble and vexation they were put to, and to what delay, nay, and to what hazard in the administration of publick justice, who lived at such a distance from Rome, and yet were subject to the emperor of Rome ; and the same was this nation of ours put to, which is about as far distant from Rome the other way, when it was in ecclesiastical affairs subject to the pope of Rome, and appeals were upon all occasions made to his court ; and the same mischiefs and thousand worse would they bring upon us who would again entangle us in that *yoke of bondage*.

C H A P. XXVI.

We left Paul at the bar, and Festus and Agrippa and Bernice, and all the great men of the city of Cesarea upon the bench, or about it, waiting to hear what he had to say for himself. Now in this chapter we have, 1. The account he gives of himself in answer to the calumnies of the Jews. And in that, (1.) His humble address to king Agrippa, and the compliment he passed upon him, ver. 1,—3. (2.) His account of his original, and education, and his profession as a Pharisee, and his adherence still to that which was then the main article of his creed, in distinction from the Sadducees, the resurrection of the dead ; however in rituals he had since departed from it, ver. 4,—8. (3.) Of his zeal against the Christian religion, and the professors of it in the beginning of his time, ver. 9,—11. (4.) Of his miraculous conversion to the faith of Christ, ver. 12,—16. (5.) Of the commission he received from heaven, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, ver. 17, 18. (6.) Of his proceedings pursuant to that commission, which had given this mighty offence to the Jews, ver. 19,—21. (7.) Of the doctrine which he had made it his business to preach to the Gentiles, which was so far from destroying the law and the prophets, that it shewed the fulfilling of both, ver. 22, 23. 2. The remarks that were made upon his apology. (1.) Festus thought he never heard a man talk so madly, and slighted him as crazed, ver. 24. And in answer to him he denies the charge, and appeals to king Agrippa, ver. 25, 26. (2.) King Agrippa being more closely and particularly dealt with thinks he never heard a man talk more rationally, and convincingly, and owns himself almost his convert, ver. 28. And Paul heartily wishes him so, ver. 29. (3.) They all agree that he was an innocent man, and that he ought to be set at liberty, and it was pity he was provoked to put a bar in his own door, by appealing to Cesar, ver. 30,—31.

1. **T**HEN Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thy self. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself, 2. I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself, this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews : 3. Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews : wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. 4. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, 5. Which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify) that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. 6. And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers : 7. Unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night, hope to come : for which hopes sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ? 9. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem : and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests ; and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them. 11. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Agrippa was the most honourable person in the assembly, having the title of king bestowed upon him though otherwise having only the power of the other governors under the emperor ; and though not here superior, yet senior to Festus, and therefore Festus having opened the cause, he as the mouth of the court, intimates to Paul a licence given him to *speak for himself*, ver. 1. And Paul was silent till he had that liberty allowed him ; for those are not the most forward to speak, that are best prepared to speak, and speak best. This was a favour which the Jews would not allow him, or not without difficulty ; but Agrippa freely gives it him. And Paul's cause was so good, that he desired no more, but to have liberty to *speak for himself*, he needed no advocate, no *Tertullus* to speak for him.

Notice is taken of his gesture, he *stretched forth his hand*, as one that was under no consternation at all, but a perfect freedom and command of himself ; it also intimates, that he was in earnest, and expected their attention, while he *answered for himself*. Observe, He did not insist upon his having appealed to Cesar, as an excuse for being silent ; did not say, I will be examined no more till I come

come to the emperor himself; but cheerfully embraceth the opportunity of doing honour to the cause he suffered for. If we must be ready to give to *every man that asketh us*, much more to every man in authority, *a reason of the hope that is in us*, 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Now in this former part of the speech,

First, Paul addresseth himself with a very particular respect to Agrippa, *ver. 2, 3*. He answered cheerfully before Felix, because he knew he had been *many years a judge to that nation*, chap. xxiv. 10. But his opinion of Agrippa goes further. Observe,

1. Being *accused of the Jews*, and having many ill things laid to his charge, he is glad he has an opportunity of *clearing himself*; so far is he from imagining that his being an apostle exempted him from the jurisdiction of the civil powers. Magistracy is an ordinance of God which we have all benefit by, and therefore must all be subject to.

2. Since he is forced to *answer for himself*, he is glad it is before king Agrippa, who being himself a proselyte to the Jewish religion understood all matters relating to that, better than the other Roman governors did; *I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews*. It seems Agrippa was a scholar, and had been particularly conversant in the Jewish learning; was *expert in the customs* of the Jewish religion, and knew the nature of them, and that they were not designed to be either *universal* or *perpetual*: He was expert also in the questions that arose upon those customs, in determining of which the Jews themselves were not all of a mind. Agrippa was well versed in the scriptures of the Old Testament, and therefore could make a better judgment upon the controversy between him and the Jews concerning Jesus being the Messiah than another could. It is an encouragement to a preacher, to have those to speak to that are intelligent, and can discern things that differ. When Paul saith, *judge ye what I say*, yet he *speaks as to wise men*, 1 Cor. x. 15.

3. He therefore begs that he would *hear him patiently*, *μακροθυμῶς*, with long-suffering. Paul designed a long discourse, and begs he would hear him out, and not be weary; he designs a plain discourse, and begs he would hear him with mildness, and not be angry. Paul had some reason to fear that as Agrippa being a Jew, was well versed in the Jewish customs, and therefore the more competent judge of his cause, so he was soured in some measure with the Jewish leaven, and therefore prejudiced against Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles; he therefore saith this to sweeten him, *I beseech thee, hear me patiently*. Sure the least we can expect, when we preach the faith of Christ, is to be heard patiently.

Secondly, He professeth that though he was hated and branded as an apostate, yet he still adhered to all that good which he was first educated and trained up in; his religion was always built upon the *promise of God made unto the fathers*; and this he still *built upon*.

1. See here *what his religion was* in his youth: his *manner of life was well known*, *ver. 4, 5*. He was not indeed born *among his own nation*, but he was bred among them at Jerusalem. Though he had of late years been conversant with the Gentiles, which had given great offence to the Jews, yet at his setting out in the world he was intimately acquainted with the Jewish nation, and entirely in their interests. His education was neither foreign nor obscure, it was *among his own nation at Jerusalem*, where religion and learning flourished. *All the Jews knew it*, all that could remember so long, for Paul made himself remarkable betimes. They that *knew him from the beginning*, could testify for him that he was a Pharisee; that he was not only of the Jewish religion, and an observer of all the ordinances of it, but that he was of the *most strict sect of that religion*, most nice and exact in observing the institutions of it himself, and most rigid and critical in imposing them upon others. He was not only called a Pharisee, but he *lived a Pharisee*: All that knew him, knew very well that never any Pharisee conformed more punctually to the rules of his order than he did. Nay, and he was of the better sort of Pharisees; for he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, who was an eminent rabbin of the school or house of Hillel, which was in much greater reputation for religion than the school or house of Samai.

Now if Paul was a Pharisee, and lived a Pharisee,

1. Then he was a scholar, a man of learning, and not an ignorant, illiterate mechanick; the Pharisees knew the law, and were well versed in it, and in the traditional expositions of it. It was a reproach to the other apostles, that they had not had academical education, but were bred fishermen, *Acts iv. 13*. Therefore that the unbelieving Jews might be left without excuse, here is an apostle raised up that had sat at the feet of their most eminent doctors.

2. Then he was a moralist, a man of virtue, and not a rake, or a loose debauched young man; if he lived like a Pharisee, he was no drunkard or fornicator; and being a young Pharisee, we may hope he was no extortioner, nor had yet learned the arts which the crafty, covetous old Pharisees had of devouring the houses of poor widows; but he was, *as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*; he was not chargeable with any instances of open vice and profaneness; and therefore as he could not be thought to have deserted his religion because he did not know it, for he

was a learned man; so he could not be thought to have deserted it because he did not love it, or was disaffected to the obligations of it, for he was a virtuous man, and not inclined to any immorality.

3. Then he was orthodox, sound in the faith and not a deist or sceptick, or a man of corrupt principles that led to infidelity; he was a Pharisee, in opposition to a Sadducee; he received those books of the Old Testament which the Sadducees rejected, believed a world of spirits, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the rewards and punishments of the future state, all which the Sadducees denied. They could not say, he quitted his religion for want of a principle, or for want of a due regard to divine revelation; no, he always had a veneration for the ancient *promise made of God unto the fathers*, and built his hope upon it.

Now though Paul knew very well that all this would not justify him before God, nor make a righteousness for him, yet he knew it was for his reputation among the Jews, and an argument, *ad hominem*, that he was not such a man as they represented him to be. Though he counted it but loss that he might win Christ; yet he mentioned it when it might serve to honour Christ. He knew very well that all this while he was a stranger to the spiritual nature of the divine law, and to heart religion, and that except his righteousness exceeded this, he should never go to heaven; yet he reflects upon it with some satisfaction that he had not been before his conversion an atheistical, profane, vicious man, but according to the light he had, had *lived in all good conscience before God*.

2. See here *what his religion is*; he has not indeed such a zeal for the ceremonial law, as he had in his youth, the sacrifices and offerings appointed by that, he thinks are superseded by the great sacrifice which they typified; ceremonial pollutions and purifications from them he makes no conscience of, and thinks the Levitical priesthood is honourably swallowed up in the priesthood of Christ; but for the main principles of his religion, he is as zealous for them as ever, and more so, and resolves to live and die by them.

1. His religion is built upon the *promise made of God unto the fathers*; it is built upon *divine revelation*, which he receives and believes and ventures his soul upon; it is built upon divine grace, and that grace manifested and conveyed by promise. The promise of God is the guide and ground of his religion; the promise *made to the fathers*, which was more ancient than the ceremonial law, *that covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ*, and which *the law that was not till four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul*, Gal. iii. 17. *Christ and heaven* are the two great doctrines of the gospel, that *God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. Now these two are the matter of the *promise made unto the fathers*; it may look back as far as the promise made to father Adam, concerning the seed of the woman, and those discoveries of a future state, which the first patriarchs acted faith upon, and were saved by that faith; but it respects chiefly the promise made to father Abraham, that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*; and, that *God would be a God to him, and to his seed after him*. The former meaning Christ, the latter heaven; for if God had not *prepared for them a city*, he would have been ashamed to have called himself their God, *Heb. xi. 16*.

2. His religion consists in *the hopes* of this *promise*; he placeth it not, as they did, in *meats and drinks*, and the observation of *carnal ordinances*, God had often shewed what little account he made of them, but in a believing dependence upon God's grace in the covenant, and upon the promise, which was the great charter by which the church was first incorporated. 1. He had *hope in Christ* as the *promised seed*; he hoped to be *blessed in him*; to receive the blessing of God, and to be truly blessed. 2. He had *hopes of heaven*; this is expressly meant, as appears by comparing, *chap. xxiv. 15*. *That there shall be a resurrection of the dead*. Paul had no confidence in the flesh, but in Christ; no expectation at all of great things in this world, but of greater things in the other world, than any this world can pretend to; he had his eyes upon a future state.

3. Herein he concurred with all the pious Jews; his faith was not only according to the scripture, but according to the testimony of the church, which was a support to it. Though they set him up as a mark, he was not singular; *our twelve tribes*, the body of the Jewish church, *instantly serving God day night*, hope to *come to this promise*, i. e. to the good promised. The people of Israel are called the twelve tribes, because so they were at first; and though we read not of the return of the ten tribes in a body, yet we have reason to think many particular persons, more or less of every tribe returned to their own land; perhaps, by degrees, the *greater part* of them that were carried away. Christ speaks of the *twelve tribes*, Mat. xix. 28. Anna, was of the tribe of Asher, *Luke ii. 36*. James directs his epistle to the *twelve tribes scattered abroad*, *Jam. i. 1*. Our twelve tribes, which make up the body of our nation, to which I and others belong. Now all the Israelites profess to believe this promise, both of Christ and heaven, and *hope to come* to the benefits of them. They all hope for a Messiah to *come*, and we that are Christians hope in a *Messiah already come*; so that we all agree to build upon the same promise. They look for the *resurrection of the dead*, and *the life of the world to come*

and that is it that I look for. Why should I be looked upon as advancing something dangerous and heterodox, or as an apostate from the faith and worship of the Jewish church, when I agree with them in this fundamental article? I hope to come to the same heaven at last that they hope to come to; and if we expect to meet so happily in our end, why should we fall out so unhappily by the way?

Nay, the Jewish church not only hoped to come to this promise, but in the hope of it they *instantly served God day and night*. The temple-service which consisted in a continual course of religious duties, morning and evening, day and night, from the beginning of the year to the end of it, and was kept up by the priests and Levites, and the stationary men, as they called them, who continually attended there to lay their hands upon the publick sacrifices, as the representatives of all the twelve tribes. This service was kept up in the profession of faith in the promise of eternal life, and in expectation of it *Paul instantly serves God day and night* in the gospel of his Son; the twelve tribes by their representatives do so in the law of Moses, but he and they do it in hope of the same promise; and therefore they ought not to look upon me as a deserter from their church, so long as I hold by the same promise that they hold by. Much more should Christians that hope in the same Jesus for the same heaven, though differing in the modes and ceremonies of worship, hope the best one of another, and live together in holy love. Or it may be meant of particular persons who continued in the communion of the Jewish church, and were very devout in their way, serving God with great intention, and a close application of mind, and constant in it, *night and day*, as Anna who departed not from the temple, but served (it is the same word here used) in fastings and prayers *night and day*, Luke ii. 37. In this way they hope to come to the promise, and I hope they will. Note, Those only can upon grounds hope for eternal life, that are diligent and constant in the service of God; and the prospect of that eternal life should engage us to diligence and constancy in all religious exercises. We should go on with our work with heaven in our eye. And those that *instantly serve God day and night*, though not in our way, we ought to judge charitably of.

4. This was it that he was now suffering for; for preaching that doctrine which they themselves, if they did but understand themselves aright, must own. *I am judged for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers*. He stuck to the promise against the ceremonial law, while his persecutors stuck to the ceremonial law against the promise; so that it is for this hope's sake, king Agrippa, that I am accused of the Jews; because I do that which I think myself obliged to do by the hope of that promise. It is common for men to hate and persecute the power of that religion in others which yet they pride themselves in the form of. Paul's hope was, what they themselves also allowed, chap. xxiv. 15. and yet they were thus enraged against him for practising according to that hope. But it was his honour, that when he suffered as a Christian, he suffered for the hope of Israel, chap. xxviii. 20.

5. This was it which he would persuade all that heard him cordially to embrace, ver. 8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* This seems to come in somewhat abruptly; but it is likely Paul said much more than is here recorded; and that he explained the promise made to the fathers, to be the promise of the resurrection and eternal life, and proved that he was in the right way of pursuing his hope of that happiness, because he believed in Christ who was risen from the dead, which was a pledge and earnest of that resurrection, which the fathers hoped for; Paul is therefore earnest to know the power of Christ's resurrection, that by it he might attain to the resurrection of the dead, See Phil. iii. 10, 11. Now many of his hearers were Gentiles, most of them, perhaps Festus particularly, and we may suppose when they heard him speak so much of Christ's resurrection, and of the resurrection from the dead which the twelve tribes hoped for, they mocked, as the Athenians did, began to smile at it, and whispered to one another what an absurd thing it was; which occasioned Paul thus to reason with them, *What? Is it thought incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* so it may be read. *If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it be marvellous in mine eyes, saith the Lord of hosts?* Zech. viii. 6. If it be above the power of nature, yet it is not above the power of the God of nature. Note, There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible that God should raise the dead. We are not required to believe any thing that is incredible, any thing that implies a contradiction. There are motives of credibility sufficient to carry us through all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and this particularly of the resurrection of the dead. Hath not God an infinite, almighty power, to which nothing is impossible? Did not he make the world at first out of nothing, with a word's speaking? Did he not form our bodies, form them out of the clay, and breathe into us the breath of life at first, and cannot the same power form them again out of their own clay, and put life into them again? Do we not see a kind of resurrection in nature at the return of every spring? Hath the sun such a force to raise dead plants, and should it seem incredible to us that God should raise dead bodies?

Thirdly, He acknowledgeth, that while he continued a Pharisee, he was a bitter enemy to Christians, and Christianity, and thought he ought to be so, and continued so to the moment that Christ wrought that wonderful change in him. This he mentions,

1. To shew that his becoming a Christian and a preacher, was not the product and result of any previous disposition or inclination that way, or any gradual advance of thought in favour of the Christian doctrine; he did not reason himself into Christianity by a chain of arguments, but was brought into the highest degree of an assurance of it, immediately from the highest degree of prejudice against it: By which it appeared, that he was made a Christian and a preacher by a supernatural power; so that his conversion in such a miraculous way, was not only to himself, but to others also, a convincing proof of the truth of Christianity.

2. Perhaps, he designs it for such an excuse of his persecutors as Christ made for his, when he said, *they know not what they do*; Paul himself, when time was, thought he did what he ought to do when he persecuted the disciples of Christ, and he charitably thinks they laboured under the like mistake. Observe,

1. What a fool he was in his opinion, ver. 9. *He thought with himself that he ought to do many things*, every thing that lay in his power, contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, contrary to his doctrine, his honour, his interest: That name did no harm, yet because it agreed not with the notion he had of the kingdom of the Messiah, he was for doing all he could against it. He thought he did God good service in persecuting those who called on the name of Jesus Christ. Note, It is possible for those to be confident they are in the right, who yet are evidently in the wrong; and for those to think they are doing their duty, who are wilfully persisting in the greatest sin. They that hated their brethren and cast them out said, *let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. lxvi. 5. Under colour and pretext of religion, the most barbarous and inhuman villanies have been not only justified, but sanctified and magnified, John xvi. 2.

2. What a fury he was in his practice, ver. 10, 11. There is not a more violent principle in the world than conscience misinformed; when Paul thought it his duty to do all he could against the name of Christ, he spared no pains or cost in it. He gives an account of what he did of that kind, and aggravates it as one that was truly penitent for it, *I was a blasphemer, a persecutor*, 1 Tim. i. 13.

1. He filled the jails with Christians, as if they had been the worst of criminals, designing hereby not only to terrify them, but to make them odious to the people. He was *the devil that cast some of them into prison*, Rev. ii. 10. took them into custody in order to their being prosecuted; *many of the saints did I shut up in prison, both men and women*, Acts viii. 2.

2. He made himself the tool of the chief priests; herein from them he received authority, as an inferior officer to put their laws in execution, and proud enough he was to be a man in authority for such a purpose.

3. He was very officious to vote unasked for, the putting of Christians to death, particularly Stephen, to whose death Saul was consenting, Acts viii. 1. and so made himself *particeps criminis*. Perhaps he was for his great zeal, though young, made a member of the Sanhedrin, and there voted for the condemning of Christians to die; or after they were condemned, he justified what was done, and commended it, and so made himself guilty, *ex post facto*, as if he had been a judge or jury man.

4. He brought them under punishments of an inferior nature, in the synagogues, where they were scourged as transgressors of the rules of the synagogue; he had a hand in the punishing of divers; nay, it should seem the same persons were by his means often punished; as he himself was five times; 2 Cor. xi. 24.

5. He not only punished them for their religion, but taking a pride in triumphing over mens consciences, he forced them to abjure their religion, by putting them to the torture; *I compelled them to blaspheme Christ*, and to say, he was a deceiver, and they were deceived in him; compelled them to deny their Master, and renounce their obligations to him. Nothing will lie heavier upon persecutors than forcing mens consciences, how much soever they may now triumph in the profelytes they have made by their violence.

6. His rage swelled so against Christians and Christianity, that Jerusalem itself was too narrow a stage for it to act upon, but being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even to strange cities. He was mad at them to see how much they had to say for themselves, notwithstanding all he did against them; mad to see them multiply the more for their being afflicted; he was exceedingly mad; the stream of his fury would admit no banks, no bounds, but he was as much a terror to himself as he was to them; so great was his vexation within himself that he could not prevail, as well as his indignation against them. Persecutors are mad men, and some of them exceedingly mad. Paul was mad to see that those in other cities were not as outrageous against the Christians, and therefore made himself busy there where he had no business, and persecuted the Christians even in strange cities. There is not a more restless

restless principle than malice, especially which pretends conscience.

This was Paul's character, and this his manner of life in the beginning of his time; and therefore he could not be presumed to be a Christian by education, or custom, or that he was drawn in by hope of preferment, for all imaginable external objections lay against his being a Christian.

12. Whereupon as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests; 13. At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. 14. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* 15. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. 19. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20. But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23. That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

All that believed a God, and have a reverence for his sovereignty must acknowledge that they who speak and act by his direction, and by warrant from him are not to be opposed; for that is *fighting against God*. Now Paul here, by a plain and faithful narrative of matters of fact, makes it out to this august assembly, that he had an immediate call from heaven, to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentile world, which was the thing that exasperated the Jews against him. He here shews,

First, That he was *made a Christian* by a *divine power*; notwithstanding all his prejudice against *that way*; he was brought into it on a sudden by the hand of heaven; not compelled to confess Christ by outward force, as he had compelled others to blaspheme him, but by a divine and spiritual energy; by a revelation of Christ from above, both *to him*, and *in him*. And this when he was in the full career of his sin going to Damascus to suppress Christianity by persecuting the Christians there. As hot as ever in the cause, his persecuting fury not in the least spent or tired, nor was he tempted to give it up by the failing of his friends, for he had at this time as ample an *authority and commission from the chief priests*, as ever he had to *persecute* Christianity when he was obliged by a superior power to give up that, and accept another commission to preach up Christianity. Two things do bring about this surprising change; a vision from heaven, and a voice from heaven, which conveyed the knowledge of Christ to him, by the two learning senses of *seeing* and *hearing*.

1. He *saw a heavenly vision*; the circumstances of which were such as that it could not be a delusion, or a *deceptio visus*, but it was without doubt a *divine appearance*.

1. He *saw a great light, a light, from heaven*, such as could not be produced by any art, for it was not in the night, but *at midday*, it was not in a house where tricks might have been played with him, but it was *in the way*, in the open air; it was such a light as was *above the brightness of the sun*, outshone and eclipsed that, (*Isa. xxiv. 23.*) and this could not be the product of Paul's own fancy; for it *shone round about them that journeyed with him*, they were all sensible of their being surrounded with this inundation of light, which made the sun itself to be in their eyes a *lesser light*. And the force and power of this light appeared in the effects of it, they *all fell to the earth* upon the sight of it, such a mighty consternation did it put them into; this light was lightning for its force, yet did not pass away as lightning, but continued to *shine round about him*. In Old Testament times God commonly manifested himself in the thick darkness, and made that his pavilion, 2 *Chron. vi. 1.*

He spoke to Abraham in a great darkness, *Gen. xv. 12.* for that was a dispensation of darkness; but now *life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel*, Christ appeared in a *great light*. In the creating of grace, as of the world, the first thing created is *light*, 2 *Cor. iv. 6.*

(2.) Christ himself *appeared to him*, *ver. 16.* *I have appeared to thee for this purpose.* Christ was in this light, though they that travelled with Paul *saw the light only*, and not Christ *in the light*: It is not every knowledge that will serve to make us Christians, but it must be *the knowledge of Christ*.

2. He *heard a heavenly voice*, an articulate one, *speaking to him*, it is here said to be *in the Hebrew tongue* (which was not taken notice of before) in his native language, the language of his religion, to intimate to him, that, though he must be *sent among the Gentiles*, yet he must not forget that he was a Hebrew, nor make himself a stranger to the Hebrew language. In what Christ said to him, we may observe, 1. That he called him by his name, and repeated it, *Saul, Saul*; which would surprize and startle him; and the more, because he was now in a strange place, where he thought no body knew him. 2. That he convinced him of sin, of that great sin which he was now in the commission of, the sin of persecuting the Christians, and shews him the absurdity of it. 3. That he interested himself in the sufferings of his followers; *Thou persecutest me*, *ver. 14.* and again, *It is Jesus whom thou persecutest*. Little did Paul think, when he was trampling upon those that he looked upon as the burthens and blemishes of this earth, that he was insulting one that was so much the glory of heaven. 4. That he checked him for his wilful resisting of those convictions; *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*, or goads, *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*. Paul's spirit at first, perhaps, began to rise, but he is told it is at his peril, and then he yields. Or, it was spoken by way of caution, take heed lest thou do resist these convictions, for they are designed to affect thee, not to affront thee. 5. That, upon his enquiry, he made himself known to him; Paul asked, *ver. 15.* *Who art thou, Lord?* let me know who it is that speaks to me from heaven, that I may answer him accordingly? and he said, *I am Jesus*; he whom thou hast despised, and hated, and vilified; I bear that name which thou hast made so odious, and the naming of it criminal: Paul thought Jesus was buried in the earth, and though stolen out of his own sepulchre, yet laid in some other; all the Jews were taught to say so, and therefore he is amazed to hear him speak from heaven, to see him surrounded with all this glory, whom he had loaded with all possible ignominy: This convinced him that the doctrine of Jesus was divine and heavenly, and not only not to be opposed, but to be cordially embraced; *that Jesus is the Messiah*, for he is not only *risen from the dead*, but he has *received from God the Father honour and glory*; and this is enough to make him a Christian immediately, to quit the society of the persecutors, whom the Lord from heaven thus appears against, and to join himself with the society of the persecuted, whom the Lord from heaven thus appears for.

Secondly, That he was made a minister by a divine authority; *that the same Jesus that appeared to him in that glorious light*, ordered him *to go preach the gospel to the Gentiles*; he did not run without sending, nor was he sent by men like himself, but by him whom *the Father sent*, *John xx. 21.* What is said of his being an apostle, is here joined immediately to that which was said to him by the way, but it appears, by *Acts ix. 15.* and *xxi. 15, 17.* that it was spoken to him afterwards; but he puts the two together for brevity sake; *Rise, and stand upon thy feet*. Those whom Christ, by the light of his gospel, casts down in humiliation for sin, it is in order to their *rising, and standing upon their feet*, in spiritual grace, strength, and comfort: If Christ *has torn*, it is that *he might heal*; if he *has cast down*, it is that he may *raise up*: *Rise then, and shake thyself from thy dust*, *Isa. lii. 2.* *help thyself, and Christ shall help thee*: He must stand up, for Christ has work for him to do; has an errand, and a very great errand to send him upon: *I have appeared to thee to make thee a minister*. Christ has the making of his own ministers, they have both their qualifications and their commissions from him; *Paul thanks Christ Jesus who put him into the ministry*, 1 *Pet. i. 12.* *Christ appeared to him to make him a minister*. One way or other *Christ will manifest himself to all those whom he makes his ministers*; for *how can they preach him, who do not know him? And how can they know him, to whom he doth not, by his Spirit, make himself known?* Observe,

1. The office to which Paul is appointed; he is made a minister to attend on Christ, and act for him, as a witness; to give evidence in his cause, and attest the truth of his doctrine; he must testify *the gospel of the grace of God*; Christ appeared to him, that he *might appear for Christ before men*.

2. The matter of Paul's testimony; he must give an account to the world, (1.) *Of the things which he had seen*, now at this time; must tell people of Christ's manifesting himself to him by the way, and what he said to him; he saw these things that he might publish them, and he did take all occasions to publish them, as here, and before, *chap. xxii.* (2.) *Of those things in which he would appear to him*; Christ now settled a correspondence with Paul, which he designed afterwards to keep up, and only told him

him now that he should hear further from him. Paul at first had but confused notions of the gospel, till Christ appeared to him, and gave him fuller instructions. *The gospel he preached he received from Christ* immediately, Gal. i. 12. but he received it gradually, some at one time, and some at another, as there was occasion. Christ often appeared to Paul, oftner, it is likely, than is recorded, and still taught him, *that he might still teach the people knowledge.*

3. The spiritual protection he was taken under, while he was thus employed as Christ's witness; all the powers of darkness could not prevail against him till he had finished his testimony, ver. 17. *Delivering thee from the people of the Jews, and from the Gentiles.* Note, Christ's witnesses are under his special care, and though they may fall into the hands of their enemies, yet he will take care to deliver them out of their hands, and he knows how to do it. Christ had shewed Paul at this time *what great things he must suffer*, chap. ix. 16. and yet tells him here he will deliver him from the people. Note, Great sufferings are reconcileable to the promise of the deliverance of God's people, for it is not promised they shall be kept from trouble, but kept through it; and sometimes God delivers them into the hands of their persecutors, that he may have the honour of delivering them out of their hands.

4. The special commission given him to go among the Gentiles, and the errand upon which he is sent to them; it was some years after Paul's conversion before he was sent to the Gentiles, or (for ought appears) knew any thing of his being designed for that purpose; see chap. xxii. 21. but at length he is ordered to steer his course that way.

(1.) There is great work to be done among the Gentiles, and Paul must be instrumental in doing it: Two things must be done which their case calls for the doing of:

1. *A world that sits in darkness* must be enlightened; those must be brought to know the things that belong to their everlasting peace, who are yet ignorant of them; to know God as their end, and Christ as their way, who, as yet, know nothing of either: He is sent to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light: His preaching shall not only make known to them those things which they had not before heard of, but shall be the vehicle of that divine grace and power by which their understandings shall be enlightened to receive those things, and bid them welcome. Thus he shall open their eyes, which before were shut against the light, and they shall be willing to understand themselves, their own case, and interest. Christ opens the heart, by opening the eyes; doth not lead men blindfold, but gives them to see their own way: He is sent not only to open their eyes for the present, but to keep them open, to turn them from darkness to light, i. e. from following false and blind guides, their oracles, divinations, and superstitious usages received by tradition from their fathers, and the corrupt notions and ideas they had of their gods, to follow a divine revelation of unquestionable certainty and truth. This was turning them from darkness to light, from the ways of darkness to those on which the light shines. The great design of the gospel is to instruct the ignorant, and to rectify the mistakes of those that are in error, that things may be set and seen in a true light.

2. A world that lies in wickedness, in the wicked one, must be sanctified and reformed; it is not enough for them to have their eyes opened, they must have their hearts renewed; not enough to be turned from darkness to light, but they must be turned from the power of Satan unto God; which will follow of course; for Satan rules by the power of darkness, and God by the convincing evidence of light. Sinners are under the power of Satan, idolaters were so in a special manner, they paid their homage to devils: All sinners are under the influence of his temptations, yield themselves captives to him, are at his beck; converting grace turns them from under the dominion of Satan, and brings them into subjection to God; to conform to the rules of his word, and comply with the dictates and directions of his Spirit, translates them out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son. When gracious dispositions are strong in the soul, as corrupt and sinful dispositions had been, it is then turned from the power of Satan unto God.

(2.) There is a great happiness designed for the Gentiles by this work that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified; they are turned from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, from the slavery of Satan, to the service of God; not that God may be a gainer by them, but that they may be gainers by him.

1. That they may be restored to his favour, which, by sin, they have forfeited, and thrown themselves out of; that they may receive forgiveness of sins: They are delivered from the dominion of sin, that they may be saved from that death which is the wages of sin: Not that they may merit forgiveness as a debt or reward, but that they may receive it as a free gift; that they may be qualified to receive the comfort of it: They are persuaded to lay down their arms, and return to their allegiance, that they may have the benefit of the act of indemnity, and may plead it in arrest of the judgment to be given against them.

2. That they may be happy in the fruition of him; not only that they may have their sins pardoned, but that they may have an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Note, 1. Heaven is an inheritance, it descends to all the children of God, for, if children, then heirs. That they may have, *κληρον, a lot*, so it might be read, alluding to the inheritances of Canaan, which were appointed by lot, and that also is the act of God, the disposal thereof is of the Lord. That they may have a right, so some read it; not by merit, but purely by grace. 2. All that are effectually turned from sin to God, are not only pardoned, but preferred; have not only their attainder reversed, but a patent of honour given them, and a grant of a rich inheritance: And the forgiveness of sins makes way for this inheritance, by taking that out of the way which alone hindered. 3. All that shall be saved hereafter, are sanctified now; those that have the heavenly inheritance, must have it in this way, they must be prepared and made meet for it; none can be happy, that are not holy; nor shall any be saints in heaven, that are not first saints on earth. 4. We need no more to make us happy, than to have our lot among them that are sanctified, to fare as they fare, that is having our lot among the chosen, for they are chosen to salvation through sanctification; they which are sanctified, shall be glorified; let us therefore now cast in our lot among them, by coming into the communion of saints, and be willing to take our lot with them, and share with them in their afflictions, which (how grievous soever) our lot with them in the inheritance will abundantly make amends for. 5. We are sanctified and saved by faith in Christ, some refer it to the word next before, sanctified by faith, for faith purifies the heart, and applies to the soul those precious promises, and subjects the soul to the influence of that grace, by which we partake of a divine nature; others refer it to the receiving both pardon, and the inheritance; it is by faith accepting the grant, it comes all to one; for it is by faith that we are justified, sanctified, and glorified; by faith, *τῇ ἐν ἐμῇ, that faith which is in me*; it is emphatically expressed; that faith which, not only receives divine revelation in general, but which, in a particular manner, fastens upon Jesus Christ, and his mediation; by which we rely upon Christ, as the Lord our righteousness; and resign ourselves to him, as the Lord our ruler; this is that by which we receive the remission of sins, the gift of the holy Ghost, and eternal life.

Thirdly, That he had discharged his ministry, pursuant to his commission, by divine aid, and under divine direction, and protection; God, that called him to be an apostle, owned him in his apostolical work, and carried him on in it with enlargement and success.

1. God gave him a heart to comply with the call, ver. 19. *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*, for any one would say he ought to be obedient to it; heavenly visions have a commanding power over earthly counsels, and it is at our peril if we be disobedient to them; yet, if Paul had conferred with flesh and blood, and been swayed by his secular interest, he would have done, as Jonah did, gone any whither, rather than upon this errand; but God opened his ear, and he was not rebellious; he accepted the commission, and, having with it received his instructions, he applied himself to act accordingly.

2. He enabled him to go through a great deal of work, though in it he grappled with a great deal of difficulty, ver. 20. He applied himself to the preaching of the gospel with all vigour. 1. He began at Damascus, where he was converted, for he resolved to lose no time, chap. ix. 20. 2. When he came to Jerusalem, where he had his education, he there witnessed for Christ, where he had most furiously set himself against him, chap. ix. 28. 3. He preached throughout all the coasts of Judea, in the country towns and villages, as Christ had done; he made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews, as Christ had appointed, and did not leave them till they had wilfully thrust the gospel from them, and then, 4. He turned to the Gentiles, and laid out himself for the good of their souls, labouring more abundantly than any of the apostles, nay, perhaps, than all put together.

3. His preaching was all practical; he did not go about to fill peoples heads with airy notions, did not amuse them with nice speculations, nor set them together by the ears with matters of doubtful disputation, but he shewed them, declared it, demonstrated it, that they ought, 1. To repent of their sins, to be sorry for them, and to confess them, and enter into covenant against them; they ought to bethink themselves, so the word *μετανοεῖν* properly signifies; they ought to change their mind, and change their way, and undo what they had done amiss. 2. To turn to God; they must not only conceive an antipathy to sin, but they must come into a conformity to God; must not only turn from that which is evil, but turn to that which is good; they must turn to God, in love and affection, and return to God, in duty and obedience, and turn, and return, from the world and the flesh; this is that which is required from the whole revolted, degenerate race of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, *ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν, to turn back to God, even to him*; to turn to him as our chief good, and highest end, as our ruler and portion, turn our eye to him, turn our heart to him, and turn our feet unto his testimonies. 3. To do works meet for repentance: This was what John preached, who was the first gospel preacher, Matt. iii. 8. Those that profess repentance must practise it, must live a life of repentance, must in every thing carry it as becomes penitents. It is not enough to speak penitent words, but we must do works agreeable to those words. As true faith, so true

true repentance, will work. Now what fault could be found with such preaching as this? Had it not a direct tendency to reform the world, and to redress its grievances, and to revive natural religion?

4. The Jews had no other quarrel with him but upon this account, that he did all he could to persuade people to be religious, and to bring them to God, by bringing them to Christ, *ver. 21.* It was for those causes, and no other, *that the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me*; and let any one judge whether those were crimes *worthy of death or of bonds*: He suffered ill, not only for doing well himself, but for doing good to others: They attempted to kill him, it was his *precious life that they hunted for*, and hated, because it was a useful life; *they caught him in the temple* worshipping God, and there they set upon him, as if the better place, the better deed.

5. He had no other help but help from heaven, and, supported and carried on by that, he went on in this great work, *ver. 22.* *Having therefore obtained help from God, I continue unto this day*; *ἐννοια*, I have stood, my life has been preserved, and my work continued; *I have stood my ground*, and have not been beaten off; *I have stood* to what I said, and have not been afraid or ashamed to persist in it. It was now above twenty years since Paul was converted, and all that time he had been very busy preaching the gospel in the midst of hazards, and what was it that bore him up? not any strength of his own resolutions, but *having obtained help of God*; for therefore, because the work was so great, and he had so much opposition, he could not otherwise have gone on in it, but by *help obtained of God*. Note, Those who are employed in work for God, shall *obtain help from God*; for he will not be wanting in necessary assistances to his servants: And our *continuance to this day*, must be attributed to *help obtained of God*; we had sunk, if he had not borne us up; had fallen off, if he had not carried us on; and it must be acknowledged with thankfulness to his praise. Paul mentions it as an evidence that he had his commission from God, that from him he had ability to execute it. The preachers of the gospel could never have done, and suffered, and prospered as they did, if they had not had immediate help from heaven, which they would not have had, if it had not been the cause of God that they now were pleading.

6. He preached no other doctrine but what agreed with the scriptures of the Old Testament; he *witnessed both to small and great*, to young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, obscure and illustrious, all being concerned in it; it was an evidence of the condescending *grace of the gospel*, that it was witnessed to the meanest, and the poor were welcome to the knowledge of it; and of the uncontestable truth and power of it, that it was neither afraid nor ashamed to shew itself to the greatest. The enemies of Paul objected against him, that he preached something more than *that men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*; those indeed were but what the prophets of the Old Testament had preached; but, besides these, he had preached Christ, and his death, and his resurrection, and that was it that they quarrelled with him for, as appears by *chap. xxv. 19.* *that he affirmed Jesus to be alive*; and so I did, saith Paul, and so I do, but therein also I say *no other than that which Moses and the prophets said should come*; and what greater honour can be done to them, than to shew that what they foretold is accomplished, and in the appointed season too? that what they said should come is come, and at the time they prefixed?

Three things they prophesied, and Paul preached:

1. *That Christ should suffer*; that the Messiah should be a sufferer, *παθὴνός*; not only a man, and capable of suffering, but that, as Messiah, he should be appointed to sufferings; that his ignominious death should be not only consistent with, but pursuant of his undertaking: *The cross of Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews*, and Paul's preaching that was the great thing that exasperated them, but Paul stands to it, that, in preaching that, he preached the fulfilling of the Old Testament predictions, and therefore they ought not only not to be offended at what he preached, but to embrace it, and subscribe to it.

2. *That he should be the first that should rise from the dead*; not the first in time but the first in influence; *that he should be the chief of the resurrection, the head, or principal one*, *πρῶτος ὁ ἀναστρέων*, in the same sense that he is called *the first-begotten from the dead*, *Rev. i. 5.* and *the first-born from the dead*, *Col. i. 18.* He opened the womb of the grave, as the first-born are said to do, and made way for our resurrection; and he is said *to be the first-fruits of them that slept*, *1 Cor. xv. 20.* for he sanctified the harvest: He was *the first that rose from the dead, to die no more*, and, to shew that the resurrection of all believers is in the virtue of his, just when he arose, *many dead bodies of saints arose, and went into the holy city*, *Matt. xxvii. 53.*

3. *That he should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles*; to the people of the Jews in the first place, for he was *to be the glory of his people Israel*, to them he shewed light by himself, and then to the Gentiles, by the ministry of his apostles, for he was *to be a light to lighten them, who sat in darkness*. In this Paul refers to his commission, *ver. 18.* *To turn them from darkness to light.* He rose from the dead, on purpose that he might shew light to the people, that he might give a convincing proof of the truth of his

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doctrine, and might send it with so much the greater power, both among Jews and Gentiles: This also was foretold by the Old Testament prophets, *that the Gentiles should be brought to the knowledge of God by the Messiah*; and what was there in all this, that the Jews could justly be displeased at?

24. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad. 25. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. 27. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them. 31. And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds. 32. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

We have reason to think that Paul had a great deal more to say in defence of the gospel he preached, and for the honour of it, and to recommend it to the good opinion of this noble audience; he was just fallen upon that which was the life of the cause, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and here he is in his element; now he warms more than before, his mouth is opened towards them, his heart is enlarged; lead him but to this subject, and let him have leave to go on, and he will never know when to conclude; for the power of Christ's death, and the fellowship of his sufferings, are with him inexhaustible subjects: It was a thousand pities then he should be interrupted as he is here, and that, *being permitted to speak for himself*, *ver. 1.* he should not be permitted to say all he designed: But it was a hardship often put upon him, and is a balm to us too, that read his discourse with so much pleasure.

But there is no remedy, the court thinks it is time to proceed to give in their judgment upon his case.

First, Festus, the Roman governor, is of opinion, that the poor man is crazed, and that Bedlam was the fittest place for him. He is convinced that he is no criminal, no ill man that should be punished, but he takes him to be a lunatick, a distracted man, that should be pitied, but, at the same time, should not be heeded, nor a word he saith regarded; and thus he thinks he hath found out an expedient to excuse himself, both from condemning Paul as a prisoner, and from believing him as a preacher; for if he be not *compos mentis*, he is not to be either condemned, or credited. Now here observe,

1. What it was that Festus said of him, *ver. 24.* *He said it with a loud voice*, did not whisper it to those that sat next him, if so, it had been the more excusable, but (without consulting Agrippa, to whose judgment he had seemed to pay mighty deference, *chap. xxv. 26.*) *said aloud*, that he might oblige Paul to break off his discourse, and might divert the auditors from attending to it, *Paul, thou art beside thyself*, thou talkest like a madman, like one with a heated brain, that knowest not what thou sayest; yet he doth not suppose that a guilty conscience had disturbed his reason, or that his sufferings, and the rage of his enemies against him, had given any shock to it, but he puts the most candid construction that could be upon his delirium, *much learning hath made thee mad*, thou hast cracked thy brains with studying. This he speaks, not so much in anger, as in scorn and contempt; he did not understand what Paul said, it was above his capacity, it was all a riddle to him; and therefore he imputes it all to a heated imagination: *Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi*. 1. He owns Paul to be a scholar, and a man of learning, because he could so readily refer to what *Moses and the prophets* wrote, books that he was a stranger to; and even this is turned to his reproach: The apostles, that were fishermen, were despised, because they had no learning; Paul, that was an university man, and bred a Pharisee, is despised as having *too much learning*, more than did him good. Thus the enemies of Christ's ministers will always have something or other to upbraid them with! 2. He reproaches him as a mad-man: The prophets of the Old Testament were thus stigmatized, to prejudice people against them, by putting them into an ill name: *Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?* said the captains of the prophet, *2 Kings ix. 11.* *Hos. ix. 7.* John Baptist and Christ were represented as *having a devil*, as being crazed. It is likely, Paul now spoke with more life and earnestness than he did in the beginning of his discourse, and used some gestures that were ex-

pressive

pressive of his zeal, and therefore Festus put this invidious character upon him, which, perhaps, never a one in the company but he thought of. It is not so harmless a suggestion as some make it, to say, concerning them that are zealous in religion above others, that they are crazed.

2. How Paul cleared himself from this invidious imputation, which, whether he had ever lain under before, is not certain; it should seem, it had been said of him by the false apostles, for he saith, 2 Cor. v. 13. *If we be beside ourselves, as they say we are, it is to God*; but he was never charged with this before the Roman governor, and therefore he must say something to this:

(1.) He denies the charge, with due respect indeed to the governor, but with justice to himself, protesting that there was neither ground nor colour for it, ver. 25. *I am not mad, most noble Festus*, nor ever was, nor any thing like it, the use of my reason, thanks be to God, has been all my days continued to me, and at this time I do not ramble, but speak the words of truth and soberness, and know what I say. Observe, Though Festus gave Paul this base and contemptuous usage, not becoming a gentleman, much less a judge, yet Paul is so far from resenting it, and being provoked by it, that he gives him all possible respect, compliments him with his title of honour, *most noble Festus*, to teach us not to render railing for railing, nor one invidious character for another, but to speak civilly to those who speak slightly of us: It becomes us, upon all occasions, to speak the words of truth and soberness, and then we may despise the unjust censures of men.

(2.) He appeals to Agrippa concerning what he spoke, ver. 26. *For the king knows of these things*, concerning Christ, and his death, and resurrection, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, which had their accomplishment therein; he therefore spoke freely before him, who knew those were no fancies, but matters of fact, knew something of them, and therefore would be willing to know more; for *I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him*; no, not that which he had related concerning his own conversion, and the commission he had received to preach the gospel; Agrippa could not but have heard of it, having been so long conversant among the Jews; *this thing was not done in a corner*; all the country rang of it; and any of the Jews present might have witnessed for him, that they had heard it many a time from others, and therefore it was unreasonable to censure him as a distracted man for relating it, much more for speaking of the death and resurrection of Christ, which was so universally spoken of. Peter tells Cornelius, and his friends, chap. x. 37. *That word you know which was published throughout all Judea*, concerning Christ, and therefore Agrippa could not be ignorant of it, and it was a shame for Festus that he was so.

Secondly, Agrippa is so far from thinking him a madman, that he thinks he never heard a man argue more strongly, nor talk more to the purpose.

1. Paul applies himself closely to Agrippa's conscience: Some think, Festus was displeased at Paul, because he kept his eye upon Agrippa, and directed his discourse to him all along, and that therefore he gave him that interruption, ver. 24. But if that was the thing that affronted him, Paul matters not; he will speak to those that understand him, and that he is likely to fasten something upon, and therefore sticks to Agrippa; and because he had mentioned Moses, and the prophets, as confirming the gospel he preached, he refers Agrippa to them, ver. 27. *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?* Dost thou receive the scriptures of the Old Testament as a divine revelation, and admit them as foretelling good things to come? He doth not stay for an answer, but, in compliment to Agrippa, takes it for granted, *I know that thou believest*; for every one knew that Agrippa professed the Jews religion, as his fathers had done, and therefore both knew the writings of the prophets, and gave credit to them. Note, It is good dealing with those that have acquaintance with the scriptures, and believe them; for such one hath some hold of.

2. Agrippa owns there was a great deal of reason in what Paul said, ver. 28. *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. Some understand this as spoken ironically, and read it thus, *Wouldst thou in so little a time persuade me to be a Christian?* But, taking it so, it is an acknowledgment that Paul spoke very much to the purpose, and that, whatever others thought of it, to his mind there came a convincing power along with what he said: Paul, thou art too hasty, thou canst not think to make a convert of me all of a sudden. Others take it as spoken seriously, and as a confession that he was in a manner, or within a little, convinced that Christ was the Messiah, for he could not but own, and had many a time thought so within himself, that the prophecies of the Old Testament had had their accomplishment in him, and now it is urged thus solemnly upon him, he is ready to yield to the conviction; he begins to sound a parley, and to think of surrendering, he is as near persuaded to believe in Christ, as Felix, when he trembled, was to leave his sins; he sees a great deal of reason for Christianity, the proofs of it he owns are strong, and such as he cannot answer; the objections against it trifling, and such as he cannot for shame insist upon; so that, if it were not for his obligations to the ceremonial law, and his respect to the religion of his fathers, and of his country, or his regard to his dignity as a king, and to his secular interests, he would turn Christian present-

ly. Note, Many are almost persuaded to be religious, that are not quite persuaded; they are under strong convictions of their duty, and of the excellency of the ways of God, but yet are over-ruled by some external inducements, and do not pursue their convictions.

3. Paul, not being allowed time to pursue his argument, concludes with a compliment, or rather, a pious wish, that all his hearers were Christians, and this wish turned into a prayer, *ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἰησοῦς, I pray to God for it*; it was his heart's desire and prayer to God for them all, that they might be saved, Rom. x. 1. ver. 29. *That not only thou, but all that hear me this day* (for he has the same kind design upon them all) *were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds*. Hereby, 1. He professeth his resolution to stick to his religion, as that which he was entirely satisfied in, and determined to live and die by. In wishing that they were all as he was, he doth, in effect, declare against ever being as they were, whether Jews or Gentiles, how much soever it might be to his worldly advantage. He sticks by the instruction God gave to the prophet, Jer. xv. 19. *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them*. 2. He intimates his satisfaction not only in the truth, but in the benefit and advantage of Christianity; he had so much comfort in it for the present, and was so sure it would end in his eternal happiness, that he could not wish better to the best friend he had in the world, than to wish him such an one as he was, a faithful, zealous disciple of Jesus Christ. *Let mine enemy be as the wicked*, saith Job, chap. xxvii. 7. *Let my friend be as the Christian*, saith Paul. 3. He intimates his trouble and concern that Agrippa went no further but being almost such an one as he was, almost a Christian, and not altogether one; for he wishes that he, and the rest of them, might be not only almost, what good would that do? but altogether such as he was, sincere, thorough-paced Christians. 4. He intimates, that it was the concern, and would be the unspeakable happiness of every one of them, to become true Christians; that there is grace enough in Christ for all, be they never so many; enough for each, be they never so craving. 5. He intimates the hearty good-will he bore to them all, he wishes them, (1.) As well as he wished his own soul, that they might be as happy in Christ as he was. (2.) Better than he now was as to his outward condition, for he excepts these bonds; he wishes they might all be comforted Christians as he was, but not persecuted Christians as he was; that they might taste as much as he did of the advantages that attended religion, but not so much of its crosses: They had made light of his imprisonment, and were in no concern for him; Festus continued him in bonds to gratify the Jews; now this would have tempted many a one to wish them all in his bonds, that they might know what it was to be confined as he was, and then they would know the better how to pity him: But he was so far from this, that when he wished them in bonds to Christ, he desired they might never be in bonds for Christ: Nothing could be said more tenderly, nor with a better decorum.

Thirdly, They all agree that Paul was an innocent man, and was wronged in this prosecution.

1. The court broke up with some precipitation, ver. 30. When he had spoken that obliging word, ver. 29. which moved them all, the king was afraid, if he were permitted to go on, he would say something yet more moving, which might work upon some of them to appear more in his favour than was convenient, and, perhaps, might prevail with them to turn Christians; the king himself found his own heart begin to yield, and durst not trust himself to hear more, but, like Felix, dismissed Paul for this time: They ought, in justice, to have asked the prisoner, whether he had any more to say for himself; but, they think, he has said enough, and therefore the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them, concluding the case was plain, and with that they contented themselves, when Paul had more to say, which would have made it plainer.

2. They all concurred in an opinion of Paul's innocency, ver. 31. The court withdrew to consult of the matter, to know one another's minds upon it, and they talked among themselves, all to the same purpose, that this man doth nothing worthy of death; he is not a criminal that deserves to die; nay, he doth nothing worthy of bonds; he is not a dangerous man, whom it is prudence to confine. After this, Nero made a law for the putting of those to death, who professed the Christian religion, but, as yet, there was no law of that kind among the Romans, and therefore no transgression; and this judgment of theirs, is a testimony against that wicked law which Nero made not long after this; that Paul, the most active, zealous Christian that ever was, even by those that were no friends to his way, was adjudged to have done nothing worthy of death, or of bonds. Thus was he made manifest in the consciences of those, who yet would not receive his doctrine; and the clamours of the hot-headed Jews, who cried out, *Away with him, it was not fit he should live*, were shamed by the moderate counsels of this court.

3. Agrippa gave his judgment, that he might have been set at liberty, if he had not himself appealed to Cesar, ver. 32. but, by that appeal, he had put a bar in his own door. Some think, that, by the Roman law, this was true, that, when a prisoner had appealed to the supreme court, the inferior courts could no more discharge him,

him, than they could condemn him ; and we suppose the law was so, if the prosecutors joined issue upon the appeal, and consented to it : But it doth not appear that in Paul's case the prosecutor, did so, but he was forced to do it to screen himself from their fury, when he saw the governor did not take the care he ought to have done for his protection. And therefore others think, that Agrippa and Festus being unwilling to disoblige the Jews by setting him at liberty, made this serve for an excuse of their continuing him in custody, when they themselves knew they might have justified the discharging of him. Agrippa that was but almost persuaded to be a Christian, proves no better than if he had not been at all persuaded.

And now I cannot tell, 1. Whether Paul repented of his having appealed to Cesar, and wished he had not done it, blaming himself for it as a rash thing, now he saw that was the only thing that hindered his discharge. He had reason, perhaps, to reflect upon it with regret, and to charge himself with imprudence and impatience in it, and some distrust of the divine protection. He had better have appealed to God than to Cesar. It confirms what Solomon saith, *Eccl. vi. 12. Who knows what is good for man in this life?* What we think is for our welfare, often proves to be a trap ; such short-sighted creatures are we, and so ill-advised in leaning, as we do, to *our own understanding*. Or, 2. Whether notwithstanding this he was satisfied in what he had done, and was easy in his reflexions upon it ; his appealing to Cesar was lawful, and what became a Roman citizen, and would help to make his cause considerable ; and for as much as when he did it, it appeared to him as the case then stood to be *for the best*, though afterwards it appeared otherwise, he did not vex himself with any self-reproach in the matter, but believed there was a providence in it, and it would issue well at last. And besides, he was told in a vision, that he must *bear witness to Christ at Rome*, chap. xxiii. 11. And it is all one to him, whether he goes thither a prisoner or at his liberty ; he knows *the counsel of the Lord shall stand*, and saith, *let it stand. The will of the Lord be done.*

C H A P. XXVII.

This whole chapter is taken up with an account of Paul's voyage towards Rome, when he was sent thither a prisoner by Festus the governor, upon his appeal to Cesar. (1.) The beginning of the voyage was well enough, it was calm and prosperous, ver. 1,—8. 2. Paul gave them notice of a storm coming, but could not prevail with them to lie by, ver. 9,—11. (3.) As they pursued their voyage, they met with a great deal of tempestuous weather, which reduced them to such extremity, that they counted upon nothing but being cast away, ver. 12,—20. (4.) Paul assured them, that though they would not be advised by him to prevent their coming into this danger, yet by the good providence of God they should be brought safely through it, and none of them should be lost, ver. 21,—26. (5.) At length they were at mid-night thrown upon an Island, which proved to be Malta, and then they were in the utmost danger imaginable, but were assisted by Paul's counsel to keep the mariners in the ship, and encouraged by his comforts to eat their meat, and have a good heart on it, ver. 27,—36. (6.) Their narrow escape with their lives when they came to shore, when the ship was wrecked, but all the persons wonderfully preserved, ver. 37,—44.

1. **A**ND when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners, unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus band. 2. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we lunched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, one Aristarchus a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. 3. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. 4. And when we had lunched from thence, we sailed unto Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra a city of Lycia. 6. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy ; and he put us therein. 7. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over again Salmone : 8. And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called, The fair havens, nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. 9. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, 10. And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. 11. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the

owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

It doth not appear *how long* it was after Paul's conference with Agrippa that he was sent away for Rome pursuant to his appeal to Cesar ; but it is likely they took the first convenience they could hear of to do it ; in the mean time Paul is in the midst of his friends at Cesarea, they comforts to him, and he a blessing to them.

But here we are told,

First, How Paul was shipped off for Italy ; a long voyage, but there is no remedy. He hath appealed to Cesar, and to Cesar he must go. *It was determined that we should sail into Italy*, for to Rome they must go by sea ; it would have been a vast way about to go by land. Hence when the Roman conquest of the Jewish nation is foretold, it is said, *Numb. xxiv. 24. Ships shall come from Shittim, i. e. Italy, and shall afflict Eber, i. e. the Hebrews.* *It was determined* by the counsel of God, before it was determined by the counsel of Festus, that Paul should go to Rome ; for whatever man intended, God had work for him to do there. Now here we are told,

1. Whose custody he was committed to ; to *one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus's band* ; as Cornelius was of the Italian band, or legion, *chap. x. 1.* He had *soldiers under him*, that were a guard upon Paul, that he might not make his escape, and likewise to protect him that he might have no mischief done him.

2. What bottom he embarked in ; they went on board a ship of Adramyttium, *ver. 2.* a sea-port of Africa, whence this ship brought African goods, and, as it should seem, made a coasting voyage for Syria, where those goods came to a good market.

3. What company he had in this voyage ; there were some prisoners that were committed to the custody of the same centurion, who probably had appealed to Cesar too, or were upon some other account removed to Rome, to be tried there, or to be examined as witnesses against some prisoners there ; perhaps, some notorious offenders, like Barrabas, that were therefore ordered to be brought before the emperor himself. Paul was linked with these, as Christ with the thieves that were crucified with him, and was obliged to take his lot with them in this voyage ; and we find in this chapter, *ver. 42.* that for their sakes he had like to have been killed, but for his sake they were preserved. Note, It is no new thing for the innocent to be *numbered among the transgressors*. But he had also some of his friends with him, Luke particularly, the penman of this book, for he puts himself in all along, we sailed into Italy, and we lunched, *ver. 2.* Aristarchus a Thessalonian, is particularly named, as being now in his company. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Trophimus the Ephesian went off with him, but he left him sick at Miletum, *2 Tim. iv. 20.* when he passed by those coasts of Asia mentioned here, *ver. 2.* and that there likewise he left Timothy. It was a comfort to Paul to have the society of some of his friends in this tedious voyage, with whom he might converse freely, though he had so much loose, profane company about him. Those that go long voyages at sea, are commonly necessitated to sojourn, as it were, in Mesek and Kedar, and have need of wisdom that they may do good to the bad company they are in, may make them better, or at least be made never the worse by them.

Secondly, What course they steered, and what places they touched at ; which are particularly recorded for the confirming of the truth of the history to those who lived at that time, and could by their own knowledge tell of their being at such and such a place.

1. They touched at Sidon, not far off from where they went on board ; thither they came *the next day*. And that which is observable there, is, that *Julius the centurion* was extraordinary civil to Paul ; it is probable he knew his case, and was one of the *chief captains or principal men* that heard him plead his own cause before Agrippa, *chap. xxv. 23.* and was convinced of his innocence and the injury done him ; and therefore though he was committed to him as a prisoner, he treated him as a friend, as a scholar, and a gentleman, and a man that had an interest in heaven, he *gave him liberty*, while the business of the ship stayed at Sidon to go among his friends there, to *refresh himself* ; and it would be a great refreshment to him. Julius herein gives an example to those in power to be respectful to those whom they find worthy of their respects, and in using their power to make a difference. A Joseph, a Paul are not to be used as common prisoners. God herein encourageth those that suffer for him to trust in him ; for he can put it into the hearts of those to befriend them, from whom they least expect it ; can make them to be pitied, nay, can make them to be prized and valued even in the eyes of those that *carry them captive*, *Psal. cvi. 46.* And it is likewise an instance of Paul's fidelity, he did not go about to make his escape, which he might have easily done. But being out upon his parol of honour, he faithfully returns to his imprisonment ; if the centurion be so civil as to *take his word*, he is so just and honest as to *keep his word*.

2. They thence sailed under Cyprus, *ver. 4.* If the wind had been fair they had gone forward by direct sailing, and had left Cyprus on the right hand ; but the wind not favouring them, they were driven to *oblique sailing with a side wind*, and so compass the island

island in a manner, and left it on the left hand. Sailors must do as they can, when they cannot do as they would, and make the best of their wind whatever point it is in, and so must we all in our passage over the ocean of this world. When the winds are contrary, yet we must be getting forward as well as we can.

3. At a port called Myræ, they changed their ship; that which they were in, it is probable, having business no further, they went a board a vessel of Alexandria bound for Italy, *ver. 5, 6.* Alexandria was now the chief City of Egypt, and great trading there was between that city and Italy; from Alexandria they carried corn to Rome; and the East India goods and Persian which they imported at the Red sea, they exported again to all parts of the Mediterranean, and especially to Italy. And it was a particular favour shewed to the Alexandrian ships in the ports of Italy that they were not obliged to strike sail, as other ships were when they came into port.

4. With much ado they made the fair havens, a port of the Island of Crete, *ver. 7, 8.* They sailed slowly many days, being becalmed, or having the wind against them. It was a great while before they made the point of Cnidus, a port of Caria, and were forced to sail under Crete, as before under Cyprus; much difficulty they met with in passing by Salmone, a promontory on the Eastern shore of the island of Crete. Though the voyage hitherto was not tempestuous, yet it was very tedious. Thus many that are not driven backward in their affairs by cross providences, yet sail slowly and do not get forward by favourable providences. And many good Christians make this complaint in the concerns of their souls, that they do not rid ground in their way to heaven, but have much ado to keep their ground; they move with many stops and pauses, and lie a great while wind bound. Observe, The place they came to was called the fair haven. Travellers say, it is known to this day by the same name, and that it answers the name from the pleasantness of its situation and prospect. And yet, 1. It was not the harbour they were bound for; it was a fair haven, but it was not their haven. Whatever agreeable circumstances we may be in, in this world, we must remember we are not at home, and therefore we must arise and depart; for though it be a fair haven, it is not the desired haven, *Psal. cvii. 30.* 2. It was not a commodious haven to winter in, so it is said, *ver. 12.* It had a fine prospect, but it lay exposed to the weather. Note, Every fair haven, is not a safe haven; nay, there may be most danger, where there is most pleasure.

Thirdly, What advice Paul gave them with reference to that part of their voyage they had before them; and it was to be content to winter where they were, and not to think of stirring till a better season of the year.

1. It was now a bad time for sailing; they had lost a deal of time while they were struggling with contrary winds. Sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was already past, i. e. the famous yearly fast of the Jews, the day of atonement, which was on the tenth day of the seventh month, a day to afflict the soul with fasting; it was about the 20th of our September. That yearly fast was very religiously observed; but (which is strange) we never have any mention made in all the scripture history of the observation of it, unless it be meant here, where it serves only to describe the season of the year. Michaelmas is reckoned by mariners as bad a time of the year to be at sea in as any other; they complain of their Michaelmas blasts: it was that time now with these distressed voyagers; the harvest was past, the summer was ended; they had not only lost time, but lost the opportunity.

2. Paul put them in mind of it, and gave them notice of their danger, *ver. 10.* I perceive, either by notice from God, or by observing their wilful resolution to prosecute the voyage, notwithstanding the peril of the season, that this voyage will be with hurt and damage; you that have effects on board, are likely to lose them, and it will be a miracle of mercy if our lives be given us for a prey. Here were some good men in the ship, and many more ill men; but in things of this nature, all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. If both be in the same ship, they both are in the same danger.

3. They would not be advised by Paul in this matter, *ver. 11.* They thought him impertinent in interposing in an affair of this nature, who did not understand navigation, and the centurion to whom it was referred to determine it, though himself a passenger, yet being a man in authority, he takes upon him to overrule, though he had not been oftener at sea, perhaps, than Paul, nor was better acquainted with these seas; for Paul had planted the gospel in Crete, *Tit. i. 5.* and knew the several parts of the island well enough. But the centurion gave more regard to the opinion of the master and owner of the ship than to Paul's; for every man is to be credited in his own profession, ordinarily, but such a man as Paul, who was so intimate with heaven, was rather to be regarded in seafaring matters, than the most celebrated sailors. Note, Those know not what dangers they run themselves into, who will be governed more by human prudence than by divine revelation. The centurion was very civil to Paul, *ver. 3.* and yet would not be governed by his advice. Note, Many will shew respect to good ministers, that will not take their advice, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31.*

12. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west, and north-west. 13. And when the south-wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence they sailed close by Crete. 14. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. 15. And when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. 16. And running under a certain island which is Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat: 17. Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quick-sands, strake sail, and so were driven. 18. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; 19. And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. 20. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved, was then taken away.

In these verses we have,

First, The ship putting to sea again, and pursuing her voyage at first with a promising gale. Observe,

1. What induced them to leave the fair havens; it was because they thought the harbour not commodious to winter in; it was pleasant enough in the summer, but in the winter they lay bleak. Or, perhaps, it was upon some other account incommodious; provisions, perhaps, were scarce and dear there; and they run upon a mischief to avoid an inconvenience, as we often do. Some of the ship's crew, or of the council that was called to advise in this matter were for staying there, rather than venturing to sea, now the weather was so uncertain. It is better be safe in an incommodious harbour, than be lost in a tempestuous sea; but they were outvoted when it was put to the question, and the more part advised to depart thence also; yet they aimed not to go far, but only to another port of the same island, here called Phenice, and some think it was so called because the Phenicians frequented it much; the merchants of Tyre and Sidon. It is here described to lie toward the south-west and north-west. Probably the haven was between two promontories, or juttings out of land into the sea, one of which pointed to the north-west, and the other to the south-west, by which it was guarded against the east winds. Thus hath the wisdom of the Creator provided for the relief and safety of them who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters. In vain had nature provided for us the waters to sail on, if it had not likewise provided for us natural harbours to take shelter in.

2. What encouragement they had at first to pursue their voyage; they set out with a fair wind, *ver. 13.* the south wind blew softly, upon which they flattered themselves with hope that they should gain their point, and so they sailed close by the coast of Crete, and were not afraid of running upon the rocks or quick sands, because the wind blew so gently. Those who put to sea with never so fair a gale know not what storms they may yet meet with; and therefore must not be secure, nor take it for granted that they have obtained their purpose, when so many accidents may happen to cross their purpose. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as though he had put it off.

Secondly, The ship in a storm presently, a dreadful storm. They looked at second causes, and took their measures from the favourable hints they gave, and imagined that because the south-wind now blew softly, it would always blow so, and in confidence of that they ventured to sea, but are soon made sensible of their folly in giving more credit to a smiling wind, than to the word of God in Paul's mouth, by which they had fair warning given them of a storm. Observe,

1. What their danger and distress was, 1. There arose against them a tempestuous wind, which was not only contrary to them, and directly in their teeth, so that they could not get forward, but a violent wind that raised the waves, like that which was sent forth in pursuit of Jonah; though Paul was following God, and going on in his duty, and not as Jonah running away from God and his duty. This wind the sailors called Euroclydon, a north-east wind, which upon those seas, perhaps, was observed to be in a particular manner troublesome and dangerous. It was a sort of a whirlwind, for the ship is said to be caught by it, *ver. 15.* It was God that commanded this wind to rise, designing to bring glory to himself, and reputation to Paul out of it; stormy winds being brought out of his treasuries, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* they fulfil his word, *Psal. cxlvii. 8.* 2. The ship was exceedingly tossed, *ver. 18.* it was kicked like a football from wave to wave, and as it is elegantly described, *Psal. cvii. 26, 27.* it and its passengers mount up to the heavens, go down again to the depths, reel too and fro, stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits-end. The ship could not possibly bear up into the wind, could not make her way in opposition to the wind; and therefore they folded up their sails, which

in such a storm would endanger them rather than do them any service, and so *let the ship drive*, let it go wherever the wind hurries it. *Non quo voluit sed quo rapit impetus undæ.* Ovid. Trist. It is probable they were very near the haven of Phenice when this tempest rose, and thought they should presently be in a quiet haven; and were pleasing themselves with the thought of it, and of wintering there, and lo, of a sudden they are in this distress. Let us therefore always rejoice with trembling, and never expect a perfect security, nor a perpetual serenity till we come to heaven. 3. They saw neither sun nor stars of many days; this made the tempest the more terrible, that they were *all in the dark*; and the use of the load-stone for the directing of sailors not being then found out, so that they had no guide at all when they could see neither sun nor stars, made the case the more hazardous. Thus melancholy sometimes is the condition of the people of God upon a spiritual account; they *walk in darkness and have no light*. Neither sun nor stars appear; they cannot dwell; nay, they cannot fasten upon any thing comfortable, or encouraging; thus it may be with them, and yet *light is sown* for them. 4. They had abundance of *winter weather*; no *small tempest*; *χειμὼν ἐκ ὀλίγου*, cold rain, and snow, and all the rigours of that season of the year; so that they were ready to perish for cold; and all this continued many days. See what hardships those many times undergo that are much at sea, besides the hazards of life they run; and yet to get gain there are still those who make nothing of all this; and it is an instance of the wisdom of divine providence, that it disposeth some to this employment, notwithstanding the difficulties that attend it, for the keeping up of commerce among the nations, and the *issles of the Gentiles* particularly; and Zebulon can as heartily rejoice in his going out, as Issachar in his tents. And, perhaps, Christ therefore chose ministers from among seafaring men, because they had been used to endure hardness.

2. What means they used for their own relief; they betook themselves to all the poor shifts (for I can call them no better) that sailors in distress have recourse to. 1. When they could not *make head* against the wind they let the ship run a drift, finding it was to no purpose to ply either the oar or the sail. When it is fruitless to struggle, it is wisdom to yield. 2. They nevertheless did what they could to avoid the present danger; there was a little island called Claudia, and when they were near that, though they could not pursue their voyage, they took care to prevent their shipwrecks, and therefore so ordered their matters that they did not run against the island, but quietly run under it, *ver. 16.* 3. When they were afraid they should scarce save the ship, they were out to save the boat, which they did with much ado. They had *much work to come by the boat*, *ver. 16.* but at last they took it up, *ver. 17.* That might be of use in any exigence, and therefore they made hard shift to get it into the ship to them. 4. They used means which were proper enough in those times, when the art of navigation was far short of the perfection it is now come to; they *undergirded the ship*, *ver. 17.* They bound the ship under the bottom of it with strong cables, to keep it from bulging in the extremity of the tempest. 5. For fear of falling *into the quick-sands*, they *struck sail*, and then let the ship go as it would. It is strange how a ship will *live at sea* (so they express it) even in very stormy weather if it have but sea-room; and when the sailors cannot *make the shore*, it is their interest to keep as far off it as they can. 6. The next day they *lightened the ship* of its cargo, threw the goods and merchandizes overboard, as Jonah's mariners did, *chap. i. 5.* being willing rather to be poor without them, than to perish with them. *Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life.* See what the wealth of this world is; how much soever it is courted as a blessing, the time may come when it will be a burthen, not only too heavy to be carried safe of itself, but heavy enough to sink him that has it. Riches are often *kept by the owners thereof to their hurt*, Eccles. v. 13. and parted with to their good. But see the folly of the children of this world, they can be thus prodigal of their goods when it is for the *saving of their lives*, and yet how sparing of them in works of piety and charity, and in suffering for Christ, though they are told by eternal truth itself that those shall be recompensed more than a thousand fold *in the resurrection of the just*. They went upon a principle of faith, who *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance*, Heb. x. 34. any man will rather make shipwreck of his goods, than of his life, but many will rather make *shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*, than of their goods. 7. The third day they *cast out the tacklings of the ship*; the utensils of it, *Armamenta*; so some render it; as it if it were a ship of force. With us it is common to heave the guns over-board in the extremity of a storm; but what heavy artillery they had then which it was necessary to lighten the ship of, I do not know; and question whether it were not then a vulgar error among seamen thus to throw every thing into the sea, even that which would be of great use in a storm, and *no great weight*.

3. The despair which at last they were brought to, *ver. 20.* *All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.* The storm continued, and they saw no symptoms of its abatement; we have known very blustering weather to continue for some weeks. The means they had used were ineffectual, so that they were *at their*

wit's end; and such was the consternation that this melancholy prospect put them into, that they had no heart either to eat or drink. They had provision enough on board, *ver. 38.* but such *bondage* were they under *through fear of death* that they could not admit the supports of life. Why did not Paul, by the power of Christ and in his name lay this storm? Why did he not say to the winds and waves, *peace, be still*, as his Master had done? surely it was because the apostles wrought miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, not for the serving of a turn for themselves or their friends.

21. But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, *Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.* 22. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any mans* life among you, but of the ship. 23. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24. Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. 27. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria about midnight, the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country: 28. And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. 29. Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. 30. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, 31. Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved. 32. Then the soldiers, cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. 33. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing. 34. Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. 35. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all, and when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat. 37. And we were in all in the ship, two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. 38. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. 39. And when it was day they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. 40. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* upon the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made towards shore. 41. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinderpart was broken with the violence of the waves. 42. And the soldiers counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. 43. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast *themselves* first into the sea, and get to land: 44. And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship: And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land.

We have here the issue of the distress of Paul and his fellow-travellers; they escaped with their lives and that was all; and that was for Paul's sake. We are here told, *ver. 37.* what number there were on board, mariners, merchants, soldiers, prisoners and others passengers, in all two hundred seventy six souls, this is taken notice of to make us the more concerned for them in reading the story, that they were such a considerable number, whose lives were now in the utmost jeopardy, and one Paul among them worth more than all the rest. We left them in despair, giving up themselves for gone; whether they *called every man on his God* as Jonah's mariners did, we are not told; it is well if the laudable practice in a storm was not gone out of fashion, and made a jest of. However Paul among these seamen was not like Jonah among his, the cause of the storm, but the comforter in the storm,

and

and as much a credit to the profession of an apostle, as Jonah was a blemish to his character as a prophet.

Now here we have,

First, The encouragement Paul gave them, by assuring them in the name of God that their lives should all be saved, then when, in human appearance, all hope that they should be saved was taken away. Paul rescued them from their despair first, that they might not die of that, and starve themselves in that, and then they were in a fair way to be rescued from their distress. *After long abstinence*, as if they were resolved not to eat, till they knew whether they should live or die, *Paul stood forth in the midst of them*: During the distress hitherto Paul hid himself among them, was one of the croud, helped with the rest to *throw out the tackling*, ver. 19. but now he distinguished himself, and, though a prisoner, undertook to be their counsellor and comforter.

1. He reproves them for not taking his advice, which was to stay where they were in the road of Lasea, ver. 8. *Ye should have hearkened to me and not have loosed from Crete*, where we might have made a shift to winter well enough, and then we should not have *gained this harm and loss*; i. e. we should have escaped it. *Harm and loss* in the world, if sanctified to us, may be truly said to be gain, for if they wean us from present things, and awaken us to think of a future state we are truly gainers by them. Observe, They did not *hearken to Paul* when he warned them of their danger, and yet if they will but acknowledge their folly and repent of it he will speak comfort and relief to them now they are in danger; so compassionate is God to those that are in misery, though they bring themselves into it by their own incogitancy, nay, by their own wilfulness and contempt of admonition. Paul before his comfort, will first make them sensible of their sin in not hearkening to him, by upbraiding them with their rashness, and probably when he tells them of their *gaining harm and loss*, he reflects upon what they promised themselves by proceeding in their voyage, that they should gain so much time, gain this and the other point, but saith he, you have gained nothing but harm and loss; how will you answer it? That which they are blamed for is their losing from Crete, where they were safe. Note, Most people bring themselves into inconvenience, because they do *not know when they are well*, but *gain harm and loss*, by aiming against advice to *mend themselves*.

2. He assures them, that though they should lose the ship, yet they should none of them lose their lives. You see your folly in not being ruled by me, he doth not say now therefore expect to fare accordingly, you may thank yourselves if you be all lost, they that *will not be counselled, cannot be helped*. No, yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; your case is sad, but it is not desperate, now *I exhort you to be of good cheer*. Thus we say to sinners that are convinced of their sin and folly, and begin to see and bewail their error, *you should have hearkened unto us*, and should have had nothing to do with sin; yet now we *exhort you to be of good cheer*; though you would not take our advice when we said, *do not presume*, yet take it now when we say, *do not despair*. They had given up the cause, and would use no further means, because *all hope that they should be saved was taken away*. Now Paul quickens them to bestir themselves yet in working for their own safety, by telling them that if they would resume their vigour they should secure their lives. He gives them this assurance when they were brought to the last extremity, for now it would be doubly welcome to them to be told that not a life should be lost, when they were ready to conclude they must inevitably be *all lost*. He tells them. 1. That they must count upon the *loss of the ship*. Those who were interested in that and the goods were probably those *greater part* that were for pushing forward the voyage, and running the venture, notwithstanding Paul's admonition, and they are made to pay for their rashness: Their ship shall be wrecked. And many a stately, strong, rich gallant ship is lost in the mighty waters in a little time, for *vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit*. But, 2. *Not a life shall be lost*. This would be good news to those that were ready to die for fear of dying, and whose guilty consciences made death look very terrible to them.

3. He tells them *what ground he had* for this assurance; that it is not a banter upon them to put them into humour, nor a human conjecture, but he has a divine revelation for it, and is as confident of it as that God is true, being fully satisfied that he has his word for it. *An angel of God* appeared to him in the night, and told him that *for his sake* they should all be preserved, ver. 23, 24, 25. would double the mercy of their preservation, that they should have it not only by providence, but by promise, and as a particular favour to Paul. Now observe here,

1. The solemn profession Paul makes of relation to God, the God from whom he had this favourable intelligence; it is he, *whose I am, and whom I serve*. He looks upon God, 1. As his *rightful owner*; that has a sovereign uncontestable title to him, and dominion over him; *whose I am*. Because *God made us, and not we ourselves*, therefore we are *not our own but his*. His we are by creation, for he made us; by preservation, for he maintains us; by redemption, for he bought us. We are more his than our own. 2. As his *sovereign ruler and Master*, that having given him being,

has right to give him law, *whom I serve*. Because *his we are*, therefore we are bound to *serve him*, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his work. It is Christ that Paul here has an eye to; he is God, and the angels are his, and go on his errands, Paul often calls himself a *servant of Jesus Christ*; he is his, and him he serves, both as a Christian, and as an apostle; he doth not say, *whose we are, and whom we serve*, for the most that were present were strangers to him, but *whose I am, and whom I serve*, whatever others do. Nay, whom I am now in the actual service of, going to Rome, not as you are, upon worldly business, but to appear as a witness for Christ. Now this he tells the company, that seeing their relief coming from his God, *whose he was, and whom he served*, they might thereby be drawn in to take him for their God, and to serve him likewise; for the same reason Jonah said to his mariners, *I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land*, Jonah i. 9.

2. The account he gives of the vision he had. *There stood by me this night an angel of God*, a divine messenger, who had used formerly to bring him messages from heaven; he *stood by him*, visibly appeared to him, probably, when he was awake upon his bed. Though he was *afar off upon the sea*, (Psal. lxxv. 5.) *in the uttermost parts of the sea*, Psal. cxxxix. 9. yet that cannot intercept his communion with God, nor deprive him of the benefit of divine visits. Thence he can direct a prayer to God, and thither God can direct an angel to him. He knows not where he is himself, yet God's angel knows where to find him out. The *ship is tossed* with winds and waves, hurried too and fro with the utmost violence, and yet the angel finds a way into it. No storms or tempests can hinder the communications of God's favour to his people, for he is a very present help, a help at hand, even when the *sea roars and is troubled*, Psal. xlv. 1, 3. We may suppose that Paul being a prisoner, had not a cabin of his own in the ship, much less a bed in the captain's cabin, but was put down into the hold, any dark or dirty place was thought good enough for him in common with the rest of the prisoners, and yet there *the angel of God stood by him*. Meanings and poverty sets none at a distance from God and his favour. Jacob when he has no pillow but a stone, no curtains but the clouds, yet has a vision of angels. Paul had this vision but *this last night*. He had himself been assured by a former vision that he should go to Rome, chap. xxiii. 11. from which he might infer that he himself should be safe, but he has this fresh vision to assure him of the safety of those with him,

3. The encouragements that were given him in the vision, ver. 24. 1. He is forbidden to fear. Though all about him are at their wit's end, and lost in despair, yet, *Fear not Paul*; fear not *their fear nor be afraid*, Ita. viii. 12. Let the *sinners in Sion be afraid*, but let not the saints be afraid, no not at sea, in a storm; for *the Lord of hosts is with them*, and their *place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks*, Isa. xxxiii. 14, 16. 2. He is assured that for his part he shall come safe to Rome; *thou must be brought before Cesar*. As the rage of the most potent enemies, so the rage of the most stormy sea cannot prevail against God's witnesses till they have *finished their testimony*. Paul must be *preserved* in this danger, for he is *reserved* for further service. This is comfortable to the faithful servants of God in straits and difficulties, that as long as God has any work for them to do their lives shall be prolonged. 3. That for his sake all that were in the ship with him should be delivered too, from perishing in this storm. *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee*. This angel that was ordered to bring him this message could have singled him out from this wretched crew, and those that were his friends too, and have carried them safe to shore, and have left the rest to perish, because they would not take Paul's counsel. But God chuseth rather, by preserving them all for his sake, to shew what great blessings good men are to the world, than by delivering him only to shew how good men are distinguished from the world. *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee*, i. e. spares them in answer to thy prayers, or for thy sake. Sometimes good men deliver *neither sons nor daughters, but their own souls only*, Ezek. xiv. 18. But Paul here delivers a whole ship's crew, almost three hundred souls. Note, God often spares wicked people for the sake of the godly; as Zoar for Lot's sake, and as Sodom might have been, if there had been *ten righteous persons* in it. The good people are hated and persecuted in the world as if they were not worthy to live in it, yet really it is for their sakes that the world stands. If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into ill company, he might justly have been cast away with them, but God calling him into it, they are preserved with him. And it is intimated, that it was a great favour to Paul, and he looked upon it to be so, that others were saved for his sake, they are *given thee*; there is no greater satisfaction to a good man, than to know that he is a publick blessing.

4. He comforts them with the same comforts wherewith he himself was comforted, ver. 25. *Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer*, you shall see even this will end well; *for I believe God*, and depend upon his word, *that it shall be even as it was told me*: He would not require them to give credit to that which he did not himself give credit to; and therefore solemnly professeth that he *believes it himself*, and the belief of it makes him easy; I doubt not but *it shall be as it was told me*: Thus he *staggers not at the promise of God* through

through unbelief. *Hath God spoken, and shall he not make it good?* No doubt he can, no doubt he will; for *he is not a man that he should lie.* And shall it be as God hath said? Then *be of good cheer, be of good courage:* God is ever faithful, and therefore let all that have an interest in his promise be ever cheerful: If with God saying and doing are not two things, then with us believing and enjoying should not.

5. He gives them a sign, telling them particularly what this tempestuous voyage would issue in, *ver. 26. We must be cast upon a certain island,* and that will both break the ship, and save the passengers; and so the prediction in both respects will be fulfilled: The pilot had quitted his post, the ship was left to run at random, they knew not what latitude they were in, much less how to steer their course, and yet providence undertakes to bring them to an island that shall be a refuge for them. When the church of God, like this ship, is *tossed with tempests, and not comforted;* when *there is none to guide her, of all her sons;* yet God can bring her safe to shore, and will do it.

Secondly, Their coming at length to an anchor upon an unknown shore, *ver. 27, 28, 29.*

1. They had been a full fortnight in the storm, continually expecting death; *the fourteenth night,* and not sooner, *they came near land;* they were *that night driven up and down in Adria,* not in the Adriatick gulf, on which Venice stands, but in the Adriatick sea, a part of the Mediterranean, containing both the Sicilian and Ionian seas, and extending to the African shore; in this sea they were tossed, and knew not whereabouts they were.

2. About midnight the mariners apprehended that they drew near to some shore, which confirmed what Paul had told them, *that they must be driven upon some island;* to try whether it was so or no, they sounded, in order to their finding the depth of the water, for the water would be ebber as they drew nearer to shore; by the first experiment, *they found they drew twenty fathom deep of water,* and by the next, *fifteen fathom;* which was a demonstration that they were near some shore; God hath wisely ordered such a natural notice to sailors in the dark, that they may be cautious.

3. They took the hint, and fearing rocks near the shore, *they cast anchor, and wished for the day;* they durst not go forward, for fear of rocks, and yet would not go back, in hope of shelter, but *they would wait for the morning, and heartily wished for it;* who can blame them when the affair came to a crisis? when they had light, there was no land to be seen; now there was land near them, they had no light to see it by; no marvel then *they wished for day.* When those that fear God walk in darkness, and have no light, yet let them not say, *The Lord has forsaken them,* or, *their God has forgotten them,* but let them do as these mariners did, *cast anchor, and wish for the day,* and be assured that the day will dawn. *Hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil.* Hold fast by that, think not of putting to sea again, but abide by Christ, and wait till the day break, and the shadows flee away.

Thirdly, The defeating of the sailors attempt to quit the ship; here was a new danger added to their distress, which they narrowly escaped. Observe,

1. The treacherous design of the shipmen, and that was to leave the sinking ship; which, though a piece of wisdom in others, yet, in those that were intrusted with the conduct of it, it was the basest fraud that could be, *ver. 30. They were about to flee out of the ship,* concluding no other, but that, when it run ashore, it must be broken all to pieces; having the command of the boat, the project was to get all of them into that, and so save themselves, and leave all the rest to perish: To cover this vile design, they pretended they would *cast anchors out of the fore-ship,* or carry them further off, and, in order to that, *they let down the boat,* which they had taken in, *ver. 16, 17. and were going into it,* having agreed among themselves, when they were in, to make straight for the shore. The treacherous seamen, like the treacherous shepherd, flees, when he sees the danger coming, and there is most need of his help, *John x. 12.* Then true is that of Solomon, *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint.* Let us therefore cease from man. Paul had, in God's name, assured them that they should come safe to land, but they will rather trust their own refuge of lyes, than God's word of truth.

2. Paul's discovery of it, and protestation against it, *ver. 31.* They all saw them preparing to go into the boat, but were deceived by the pretence they made, only Paul saw through it, and gave notice to the centurion, and the soldiers, concerning it, and told them plainly, *Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved;* the skill of a mariner is seen in a storm, and in the distress of the ship, then is the proper time for him to exert himself; now the greatest difficulty of all was before them, and therefore the shipmen are now more necessary than ever yet; it was indeed not by any skill of theirs that they were brought to land, for it was quite beyond their skill, but now they are near land, they must use their art to bring the ship to it: When God has done that for us which we could not, we must then in his strength help ourselves. Paul speaks humanly, when he saith, *Ye cannot be saved, except these abide in the ship;* and doth not at all weaken the assurances he had divinely given that they should infallibly be saved. God,

that appointed the end that they should be saved, appointed the means that they should be saved by the help of these shipmen; though, if they had gone off, no doubt, God would have made his word good some other way. Paul speaks as a prudent man, not as a prophet, when he saith, *these are necessary to your preservation.* Duty is ours, events are God's; and we do not trust God, but tempt him, when we say, we put ourselves under his protection, and do not use proper means, such as are within our power, for our own preservation.

3. The effectual defeating of it by the soldiers, *ver. 32.* It was no time to stand arguing the case with the shipmen, and therefore they made no more ado, *but cut the ropes of the boat,* and, though it might otherwise have done them service in their present distress, they chose rather to let it fall off, and lose it, than suffer it to do them this disservice: And now the shipmen, being forced to stay in the ship, whether they would or no, are forced likewise to work for the safety of the ship, as hard as they could, because if the rest perish, they must perish with them.

Fourthly, The new life which Paul put into the company, by his cheerful inviting them to take some refreshment, and the repeated assurances given them, that they should all of them have their lives given them for a prey. Happy they, who had such a one as Paul in their company! who not only had correspondence with heaven, but was of a hearty, lively spirit with those about him, that sharpened the countenance of his friend, as iron sharpens iron. Such a friend in distress, when without are fightings, and within are fears, is a friend indeed. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel, *Prov. xxvii. 10.* Such was Paul's here to his companions in tribulation. The day was coming on; they that wish for the day, let them wait a while, and they shall have what they wish for; the dawning of the day revived them a little, and then Paul got them together.

1. He chid them for their neglect of themselves, that they had so far given way to fear and despair, as to forget, or not to mind their food: *This is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing;* and that is not well, *ver. 33.* Not that they had all, or any of them, continued fourteen days without any food, but they had not had any set meal, as they used to have, of all that time; they eat very little, next nothing: Or, *you have continued fasting,* i. e. *you have lost your stomach;* you have had no appetite at all to your food, nor any relish of it, through prevailing fear and despair. A very disconsolate state is thus expressed, *Psaln cii. 4. I forget to eat my bread.* It is a sin to starve the body, and to deny it its necessary supports; he is an unnatural man indeed that hateth his own flesh, and doth not nourish and cherish it; and a sore evil under the sun, to have a sufficiency of the good things of this life, and not to have power to use them, *Eccles. vi. 2.* And if this arise from the sorrow of the world, and from any inordinate fear or trouble, it is so far from excusing it, that it is another sin, it is discontent, it is distrust of God, it is all wrong: What folly is it to die, for fear of dying! but thus the sorrow of the world works death, while joy in God is life, and peace, in the greatest distresses and dangers.

2. He courts them to their food, *ver. 34. Therefore I pray you to take some meat;* we have a hard struggle before us, must get to shore as well as we can; if our bodies be weak through fasting, we shall not be able to help ourselves. The angel bid Elijah, *Arise and eat,* for otherwise he would find the journey too great for him, *1 Kings xix. 7.* so Paul will have these people eat, or otherwise the waves will be too hard for them: *I pray you, παρκαλιῶ, I exhort you,* if you will be ruled by me, take some nourishment; though you have no appetite to it, though you have fasted away your stomach, yet let reason bring you to it, for this is for your health; or rather, your preservation, or safety, at this time; it is for your salvation, you cannot, without nourishment, have strength to shift for your lives: As he that will not labour, let him not eat; so he that means to labour, must eat: Weak and trembling Christians, that give way to doubts and fears about their spiritual state, continue fasting from the Lord's supper, and fasting from divine consolations, and then complain they cannot go on in their spiritual work and warfare, and it is long of themselves, if they would feed and feast, as they ought, upon the provision Christ has made for them, they would be strengthened, and it would be for their souls health and salvation.

3. He assures them of their preservation: *There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.* It is a proverbial expression, noting a compleat indemnity. It is used *1 Kings i. 52. Luke xxi. 18.* You cannot eat, for fear of dying; I tell you, you are sure of living, and therefore eat: You will come to shore wet and cold, but sound wind and limb; your hair wet, but not a hair lost.

4. He himself spread their table for them; for none of them had any heart to do it, they were all so dispirited: When he had thus spoken he took bread, fetched it from the ship's stores, to which every one might safely have access, when none of them had an appetite: They were not reduced to short allowance, as sailors sometimes are, when they are kept longer at sea than they expected by distress of weather; they had plenty, but what good did that do them, when they had no stomach? We have reason to be thankful

ful to God that we have not only food to our appetite, but appetite to our food; that our soul *abhors not even dainty meat*, Job xxxiii. 20. through sickness, or sorrow.

5. He was chaplain to the ship, and they had reason to be proud of their chaplain; *he gave thanks to God in presence of them all*. We have reason to think he had often prayed with Luke and Aristarchus, and, what others there were among them that were Christians, *that they prayed daily together*; but whether he had before this prayed with the whole company promiscuously, is not certain; now *he gave thanks to God in presence of them all*, that they were alive, and had been preserved hitherto, and that they had a promise that their lives should be preserved, in the imminent peril now before them; *he gave thanks for the provision they had*, and begged a blessing upon it: *We must in every thing give thanks*; and must particularly have an eye to God in receiving our food; for it is *sanctified to us by the word of God, and prayer*; and is *to be received with thanksgiving*: Thus the curse is taken off from it, and we obtain a covenant right to it, and a covenant blessing upon it, 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4, 5. And it is *not by bread alone that man lives, but by the word of God*, which must be met with prayer. *He gave thanks in presence of them all*, not only to shew that he served a master he was not ashamed of, but to invite them into his service too: If we crave a blessing upon our meat, and *give thanks* for it in a right manner, we shall not only keep up a comfortable communion with God ourselves, but credit our profession, and recommend it to the good opinion of others.

6. He set them a good example; *when he had given thanks, he broke the bread* (it was sea-biscuit) and *he began to eat*; whether they would be encouraged or no, he would; if they would be fullen, and, like forward children, refuse their victuals, because they had not every thing to their mind, he would *eat his meat, and be thankful*. Those that teach others, are inexcusable, if they do not themselves as they teach; and the most effectual way of preaching is, by example.

7. It had a happy influence upon them all, *ver. 36. Then were they all of good cheer*. They then ventured to believe the message God sent them by Paul, when they plainly perceived that Paul believed it himself, who was in the same common danger with them. Thus God sends *good tidings* to the perishing world of mankind, by those that are of themselves, and in the same common danger with themselves, that are sinners too, and must be saved, if ever they be saved, in the same way in which they persuade others to venture; for it is a common salvation which they *bring the tidings* of; and it is an encouragement to people to commit themselves to Christ as their Saviour, when those who invite them to do so make it to appear that they do so themselves; and it is here, upon this occasion, that the number of the persons is set down, which we took notice of before, *they were in all two hundred threescore and sixteen souls*: See how many may be influenced by the good example of one! *They did all eat, nay, they did all eat enough*, *ver. 38. they were satiated with food*, or filled with it; *they made a hearty meal*; which explains the meaning of *their fasting before for fourteen days*; not *that they did not eat* of all that time, but they never had their belly full of all that time, as they had now.

8. They once more *lightened the ship*, that it might escape the better in the shock it was now to have; they had before thrown *the wares, and the tackle over-board*, and now *the wheat*, the victuals and provisions they had; better they should sink it, than that it should sink them. See what good reason our Saviour had to call our bodily food, *meat that perisheth*! we may ourselves be under a necessity of throwing that away to save our lives, which we had gathered and laid up for the support of our lives. It is probable, *the ship* was over-loaded with the multitude of the passengers (for this comes in just after the account of the number of them) and that obliged them so often to *lighten the ship*.

Fifthly, *Their putting to shore, and the saving of the ship* in the adventure: It was *about break of day when they eat their meat*, and when it was fair day they began to look about them; and here we are told,

1. *That they knew not where they were*; they could not tell what country it was they were now upon the coast of, whether it was Europe, Asia, or Africa, for each had shores washed by the Adriatick sea: It is probable, these shipmen had often sailed this way, and thought they knew every country they came near perfectly well, and yet here they were at a loss. *Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom*, since it may, perhaps, fail him thus egregiously even in his own profession.

2. *They observed a creek with a level shore, into which they hoped to thrust the ship*, *ver. 39*. Though they knew not what country it was, nor whether the inhabitants were friends or foes, civil or barbarous, they determined to cast themselves upon their mercy; it was dry land, which would be very welcome to those that had been so long *at sea*: It was pity but they had had some help from the shore, a pilot sent them that knew the coast, who might steer *their ship in*; or another second ship, to take some of the men on board. Those who live on the sea-coast, have often opportunity of succouring those *that are in distress at sea*, and of saving precious lives, and they ought to do their utmost in order to it, with

all readiness and cheerfulness; for it is a great sin, and very provoking to God, *to forbear to deliver them that are driven unto death, and are ready to be slain*; and it will not serve for an excuse to say, *Behold, we knew it not*; when either we did, or might, and should have *known it*, Prov. xxiv. 11. I have been told there are some, and in our own nation too, that, when from *the sea-coast they see a ship in distress, and at a loss*, will, by misleading fires, or otherwise, purposely lead *them into danger, that the lives may be lost, and they may have the plunder of the ship*: One can scarce believe that any of the human nature could possibly be so wicked, so barbarously inhuman, and should have so much of the devil in them; if there be, *let them know of a truth, that they shall have judgment without mercy, who have shewed no mercy*.

3. They made straight to the shore with wind and tide, *ver. 40. They took up the anchors, the four anchors which they cast out of the stern*, *ver. 29*. Some think, they took pains to weigh them up, hoping they should have use for them again at the shore; others, that they did it with such precipitation, that they were forced to *cut the cables, and leave them*; the original will admit either; *they then committed themselves to the sea*, the wind standing fair to carry them into the port, and *they loosed the rudder-bands*, which were fastened, during the storm, for the greater steadiness of the ship, but now they were *putting into the port were loosed*, that the pilot might steer with the greater freedom; *they then hoisted up the main-sail to the wind, and made towards shore*. The original words here used for *the rudder-bands*, and *the main-sail*, find the critics a great deal of work to accommodate them to the modern terms; but they need not give us any difficulty, who are content to know that, when they saw the shore, they hastened to it as fast as they could; and, perhaps, made more haste than good speed. And should not a poor soul, that has long been struggling with winds and tempests in this world, long to put in to the safe and quiet haven of everlasting rest? Should it not get clear from all that which fastens it to this earth, and straitens the out-goings of its pious and devout affections heavenwards? And should it not *hoist up the main-sail* of faith to the wind of the Spirit, and so with longing desires *make to shore*.

4. They made a shift among them *to run the ship a-ground*, in a shelf, or bed of sand, as it should seem, or an *isthmus*, and neck of land, washed with the sea on both sides, and therefore *two seas* are said *to meet* upon it, and *there the fore-part stuck fast*, and then, when it had no liberty to play, as a ship has when it rides at anchor, but remained unmoveable, *the hinder-part* would soon be *broken* of course *by the violence of the waves*: Whether the shipmen did not do their part, being angry that they were disappointed in their design to escape, and therefore wilfully *run the ship a-ground*, or whether we may suppose that they did their utmost to save it, but God, in his providence, over-ruled, for the fulfilling of Paul's word, *that the ship must be lost*, *ver. 22*. I cannot say; but this we are sure of, *that God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers*, Isa. xlv. 26. The ship that had strangely weathered the storm in the vast ocean, where it had room to roll, is dashed to pieces when it sticks fast. Thus, if the heart fixeth in the world, in love and affection, and adherence to it, it is lost, Satan's temptations beat against it, and it is gone; but, as long as it keeps above the world, though it be tost with its cares and tumults, there is hope of it. They had the shore in view, and yet suffered shipwreck in the harbour, to teach us never to be secure.

Sixthly, A particular danger that Paul and the rest of the prisoners were in, besides their share in the common calamity, and their deliverance from it.

1. In this critical moment, when every man hung in doubt of his life, *the soldiers advised the killing of the prisoners*, that were committed to their custody, and whom they were to give account of, *lest any of them should swim out, and escape*, *ver. 42*. There was no great danger of that, for they could not escape far, weak and weary as they were, and, under the eye of so many soldiers, that had the charge of them, it was not likely they should attempt it; and, if it should so happen, though they might be obnoxious *to the law* for a permissive escape, yet, in such a case as this, equity would certainly relieve them: But it was a brutish, barbarous motion, and so much the worse, that they were thus prodigal of other peoples lives, when, without a miracle of mercy, they must lose their own.

2. *The centurion*, for Paul's sake, quashed this motion presently: Paul had found favour with him, whose prisoner he was, as *Joseph with the captain of the guard*: Julius, though he despised Paul's advice, *ver. 41*. yet he afterwards saw a great deal of cause to respect him, and therefore, being *willing to save Paul*, he stayed the execution of that bloody project, and, *in favorem vite*, *he kept them from their purpose*. It doth not appear they were any of them malefactors convicted, but only suspected, and waiting their trial, and, in such a case as this, better ten guilty ones should escape, than one that was innocent be slain. As God had saved all in the ship for Paul's sake, so here the centurion saves all the prisoners for his sake; such a diffusive good is a good man!

Seventhly, The saving of the lives of all the persons in the ship, by the wonderful providence of God. When *the ship broke* under

under them, surely *there was but a step between them and death*; and yet infinite mercy interposed, and that step was not stepped.

1. Some were saved by swimming; the centurion commanded his own soldiers in the first place, as many of them as could swim, to get to land first, and to be ready to receive the prisoners, and prevent their escape: The Romans trained up their youth, among other exercises, to that of swimming, and it was often of service to them in their wars: Julius Cesar was a famous swimmer: It may be very useful to those who deal much at sea, but otherwise perhaps more lives have been lost by swimming in sport, and learning to swim, than have been saved by swimming for need.

2. The rest with much ado scrambled to the shore, some on boards that they had loofe with them in the ship, and others on the broken pieces of the ship, every one making the best shift he could for himself and his friends, and the more busy, because they were assured their labour should not be vain; but so it came to pass, that, through the good providence of God, none of them miscarried, none of them were by accident turned off, but they escaped all safe to land. See here an instance of the special providence of God in the preservation of peoples lives, and particularly in the deliverance of many from perils by waters, ready to sink, and yet kept from sinking, the deep from swallowing them up, and the water-floods from overflowing them; the storm turned into a calm, they rescued from the dreaded sea, and brought to the desired haven. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness! Psalm cvii. 30, 31. Here was an instance of the performance of a particular word of promise which God gave, that all the persons in this ship should be saved for Paul's sake. Though there may be great difficulty in the way of the promised salvation, yet it shall, without fail, be accomplished; and even the wreck of the ship may furnish out means for the saving of the lives; and when all seems to be gone, all proves to be safe; though it be on boards, and broken pieces of the ship.

C H A P. XXVIII.

We are the more concerned to take notice of, and to improve what is here recorded concerning blessed Paul, because after the story of this chapter, we hear no more of him in the sacred history, though we have a great deal of him yet before us in his epistles; we have attended him through several chapters from one judgment-seat to another, and could at last have taken leave of him with the more pleasure, if we had left him at liberty; but, in this chapter, we are to condole him, and yet congratulate him: (1.) We condole him as a poor shipwrecked passenger, stripped of all, and yet congratulate him, 1. As singularly owned by his God in his distress, preserved himself from receiving hurt by a viper that fastened on his hand, ver. 1,—6. and being made an instrument of much good in the island on which they were cast, in healing many that were sick, and particularly the father of Publius, the chief man of the island, ver. 7,—9. 2. As much respected by the people there, ver. 10. (2.) We condole him as a poor confined prisoner, carried to Rome under the notion of a criminal removed by habeas corpus, ver. 11,—16. and yet we congratulate him, 1. Upon the respect shewed him by the Christians at Rome, who came a great way to meet him, ver. 15. 2. Upon the favour he found with the captain of the guard, into whose custody he was delivered, who suffered him to dwell by himself, and did not put him in the common prison, ver. 16. 3. Upon the free conference he had with the Jews at Rome, both about his own affair, ver. 17,—22. and upon the head of the Christian religion in general, ver. 23. the issue of which was, that God was glorified, many were edified, the rest left inexcusable, and the apostles justified in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, ver. 24,—29. 4. Upon the undisturbed liberty he had to preach the gospel to all comers, in his own house, for two years together, ver. 30, 31.

1. **A**ND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 2. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6. Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. 7. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the

island, whose name was Publius, who received us and lodged us three days courteously. 8. And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux, to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hand on him, and healed him. 9. So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10. Who also honoured us with many honours, and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

What a great variety of places and circumstances do we find Paul in! He was a planet, and not a fixed star. Here we have him in an island, to which, in all probability, he had never come, if he had not been thrown upon it by a storm; and yet, it seems, God has work for him to do here: Even stormy winds fulfil God's counsel; and an ill wind indeed it is that blows no body any good; this ill wind blew good to the island of Melita; for it gave them Paul's company for three months, who was a blessing to every place he came to. This island was called Melita, lying between Sicily and Africa; twenty miles long, and twelve broad; it lies farthest from the continent of any island in the Mediterranean; it is about sixty miles from Sicily: It has been famous since for the knights of Malta, who, when the Turks over-run that part of Christendom, made a noble stand, and gave some check to the progress of their arms.

Now here we have,

First, The kind reception which the inhabitants of this island gave to the distressed strangers that were shipwrecked on their coast, ver. 2. *The barbarous people shewed us no little kindness.* God had promised that there should be no loss of any man's life; and, as for God, his work is perfect; if they had escaped the sea, and, when they came ashore, had perished for cold or want, it had been all one; therefore providence continues its care of them; and what benefits we receive by the hand of man, must be acknowledged to come from the hand of God; for every creature is that to us, and no more, that he makes it to be; and, when he pleaseth, as he can make enemies to be at peace, so he can make strangers to be friends, friends at need, and those are friends indeed; friends in adversity, and that is the time that a brother is born for. Observe,

1. The general notice taken of the kindness which the natives of Malta shewed to Paul, and his company; they are called barbarous people, because they did not, in language and customs, conform either to the Greeks or Romans, who looked superciliously enough upon all but themselves as barbarians, though otherwise civilized enough, and, perhaps, in some cases, more civil than they: These barbarous people, however they were called so, were full of humanity; they shewed us no little kindness: So far were they from making a prey of this shipwreck, as many I fear, who are called Christian people, would have done, that they laid hold on it as an opportunity of shewing mercy! The Samaritan is a better neighbour to the poor wounded man, than the priest, or Levite: And verily we have not found greater humanity among Greeks, or Romans, or Christians, than among those barbarous people; and it is written for our imitation, that we may hence learn to be compassionate to those that are in distress and misery, and to relieve and succour them to the utmost of our ability, as those that know we ourselves are also in the body; we should be ready to entertain strangers, as Abraham, who sat at his tent-door, to invite passengers in, Heb. xiii. 2. but especially strangers in distress, as these were: Honour all men. If providence hath so appointed the bounds of our habitation, as to give us an opportunity of being frequently serviceable to persons at a loss, we should not place it among the inconveniencies of our lot, but the advantages of it; because it is more blessed to give, than to receive: Who knows but these barbarous people had their lot cast in this island for such a time as this?

2. A particular instance of their kindness; they kindled a fire, in some large hall or other, and they received us every one, made room for us about the fire, and bid us all welcome, without asking either what country we were of, or what religion: In swimming to the shore, and coming on the broken pieces of the ship, we must suppose they were sadly wet, that they had not a dry thread on them; and, as if that were not enough, to compleat the deluge, waters from above met those from below, and it rained so hard, that that would wet them to the skin presently; and it was a cold rain too; so that they wanted nothing so much as a good fire (for they had eaten heartily but just before on ship-board) and that they got for them presently, to warm them, and dry their clothes. It is sometimes as much a piece of charity to poor families to supply them with fuel, as with food or raiment: Be ye warmed, is as necessary, as be ye filled. When, in the extremities of bad weather, we find ourselves fenced against the rigours of the season, by the accommodations of a warm house, bed, and clothes, and a good fire, we should think how many lie exposed to the present rain, and to the cold, and pity them, and pray for them, and help them if we can.

Secondly, The further danger that Paul was in by a *viper's fastening on his hand*, and the unjust construction that the people put upon it. Paul is among strangers, and appears one of the meanest and most contemptible of the company, therefore God distinguisheth him, and soon makes him to be taken notice of.

1. When the fire was to be made, and to be made bigger, that so great a company might all have the benefit of it, Paul was as busy as any of them in gathering sticks, ver. 3. Though he was free from all, and of greater account than any of them, yet he made himself servant of all. Paul was an industrious, active man, and loved to be doing, when any thing was to be done, and never contrived to take his ease; Paul was a humble, self-denying man, and would stoop to any thing by which he might be serviceable, even to the gathering of sticks to make a fire of. We should reckon nothing below us but sin, and be willing to condescend to the meanest offices, if there be occasion, for the good of our brethren. The people were ready to help them, yet Paul, wet and cold as he is, will not throw it all upon them, but will help himself. They that receive benefit by the fire, should help to carry fuel to it.

2. The sticks being old, dry rubbish, it happened there was a viper among them, that lay as dead till it came to the heat, and then revived, or lay quiet till it felt the fire, and then was provoked, and flew at him that unawares threw it into the fire, and fastened upon his hand, ver. 3. Serpents, and such venomous creatures, use to lie among sticks, hence we read of him that leans on the wall, and a serpent bites him, Amos v. 19. It was so common, that people were by it frightened from tearing hedges, Eccles. x. 8. *Who breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him*: As there is a snake under the green grass, so there is often under the dry leaves. See how many perils human life is exposed to, and what danger we are in from the inferior creatures, which are many of them become enemies to men, since men became rebels to God; and what a mercy it is that we are preserved from them as we are! We often meet with that which is mischievous, where we expect that which is beneficial; and many come by hurt, when they are honestly employed, and in the way of their duty.

3. The barbarous people concluded, that Paul, being a prisoner, was certainly a murderer, that had appealed to Rome, to escape justice in his own country, and that this viper was sent, by divine justice, to be the avenger of blood; or, if they were not aware that he was a prisoner, they supposed that he was in his flight; and when they saw the venomous animal hang on his hand, which, it seems, he could not, or would not, immediately throw off, but let it hang, they concluded, *No doubt this man is a murderer*, hath shed innocent blood, and therefore, though he hath escaped the sea, yet divine vengeance pursues him, and fastens upon him, now he is pleasing himself with the thoughts of that escape, and will not suffer him to live. Now in this we may see,

(1.) Some of the discoveries of natural light; they were barbarous people, perhaps, had no books or learning among them, and yet they knew naturally, 1. That there is a God that governs the world, and a providence that presides in all occurrences; that things do not come to pass by chance, nor not such a thing as this, but by divine direction. 2. That evil pursues sinners; that there are good works which God will reward, and wicked works that he will punish; there is a divine nemesis, a vengeance, which, sooner or later, will reckon for enormous crimes: They believe not only that there is a God, but that this God hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*, even to death. 3. That murder is a heinous crime, and which shall not long go unpunished; that *who sheds man's blood, if his blood be not shed by man*, by the magistrate, as it ought to be, it shall be shed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, who is the avenger of wrong. Those that think they shall go unpunished in any evil way, will be judged out of the mouth of these barbarians, who could say without book, *Wo to the wicked, for it shall be ill with them; for the reward of their hands shall be given them*. Those that, because they have escaped many judgments, are secure, and say, *They shall have peace, though they go on*; and have their hearts so much the more set to do evil, because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily; may learn from these illiterate people, that though malefactors have escaped the vengeance of the sea, yet there is no outrunning divine justice, *vengeance suffers not to live*. In Job's time you might ask them that go by the way, ask the next body you met, and they would tell you, *that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction*.

(2.) Some of the mistakes of natural light, which needed to be rectified by divine revelation; in two things their knowledge was defective: 1. That they thought all wicked people are punished in this life; that divine vengeance never suffers great and notorious sinners, such as murderers are, to live long; but that, if they come up out of the pit, they shall be taken in the snare, Jer. xlviii. 43, 44. *if they flee from a lion, a bear shall meet them*, Amos v. 19. if they escape being drowned, a viper shall fasten upon them; whereas it is not so; the wicked, even murderers, sometimes live, become old, yea, are mighty in power; for the day of vengeance is to come in the other world, the great day of wrath; and though some are made examples of in this world, to prove that there is a

God; and a providence; yet many are left unpunished, to prove that there is a judgment to come. 2. That they thought all that are remarkably afflicted in this life are wicked people; that a man, on whose hand a viper fastens, may from thence be judged to be a murderer; as if *those on whom the tower in Siloam fell, must needs be greater sinners than all in Jerusalem*. This mistake Job's friends went upon in their judgment upon his case; but divine revelation sets this matter in a true light, that all things come ordinarily alike to all; that good men are oftentimes greatly afflicted in this life, for the exercise and improvement of their faith and patience.

4. When he shook off the viper from his hand, yet they expected that divine vengeance would ratify the censure they had passed, and that he should have swollen and burst, through the force of the poison, or that he should have fallen down dead suddenly. See how apt men are, when once they have got an ill opinion of a man, though never so unjust, to abide by it, and to think that God must necessarily confirm and ratify their peevish sentence! It was well they did not knock him down themselves, when they saw he did not swell and fall down; but so considerate they are, as to let providence work, and to attend the motions of it.

Thirdly, Paul's deliverance from the danger, and the undue construction the people put upon that: *The viper's fastening on his hand*, was a trial of his faith; and it was found to praise, and honour, and glory: For,

1. It doth not appear that it put him into any fright or confusion at all; he did not shriek or start, nor, as it would be natural for us to do, throw it off with terror and precipitation; for he suffered it to hang on so long, as that the people had time to take notice of it, and to make their remarks upon it: Such a wonderful presence of mind he had, and such a composure, as no man could have upon such a sudden accident, but by the special aids of divine grace, and the actual belief and consideration of that word of Christ concerning his disciples, Mark xvi. 18. *They shall take up serpents*. This it is to have the heart fixed, trusting in God.

2. He carelessly shook off the viper into the fire, without any difficulty, or calling for help, or any means used to loosen its hold; and, it is probable, it was consumed in the fire. Thus, in the strength of the grace of Christ, believers shake off the temptations of Satan with a holy resolution, saying, as Christ did, *Get thee behind me, Satan; the Lord rebuke thee*; and thus they keep themselves, that the wicked one toucheth them not, so as to fasten upon them, 1 John v. 18. When we despise the censures and reproaches of men, and look upon them with a holy contempt, having the testimony of conscience for us, then we do, as Paul here, shake off the viper into the fire: It doth us no harm, except we either fret at it, or be deterred by it from our duty, or be provoked to render railing for railing.

3. He was never the worse: They that thought it would have been his death, looked a great while, but saw no harm at all come to him: God, hereby, intended to make him remarkable among these barbarous people, and so to make way for the entertainment of the gospel among them. It is reported, that, after this, no venomous creature would live in that island, no more than in Ireland; but I do not find that the matter of fact is confirmed, though the Popish writers speak of it with assurance.

4. They then magnified him as much as before they had vilified him: *They changed their minds, and said, that he was a god*; an immortal god; for they thought it impossible that a mortal man should have a viper hang on his hand so long, and be never the worse. See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind, and how apt it is to run into extremes both ways; from sacrificing to Paul and Barnabas, to stoning of them! and here, from condemning him as a murderer, to idolizing him as a god!

Fourthly, The miraculous cure of an old gentleman that was ill of a fever, and of others that were otherwise diseased, by Paul. And with these confirmations of the doctrine of Christ, no doubt, there was a faithful publication of it. Observe,

1. The kind entertainment which Publius, the chief man of the island, gave to these distressed strangers; he had a considerable estate in the island, and, some think, was governor, and he received them, and lodged them three days very courteously, that they might have time to furnish themselves in other places at the best hand. It is happy when God gives a large heart to those to whom he has given a large estate. It became him, who was the chief man of the island, to be most hospitable and generous; who was the richest man, to be rich in good works.

2. The illness of the father of Publius; he lay sick of a fever, and a bloody flux; which often go together, and, when they do, are commonly fatal. Providence ordered it that he should be ill just at this time, that the cure of him might be a present recompence to Publius for his generosity, and the cure of him by miracle a recompence particularly for his kindness to Paul, whom he received in the name of a prophet, and had this prophet's reward.

3. His cure; Paul took cognizance of his case, and though we do not find he was urged to it, for they had no thought of any such thing,

thing, yet he entered in, not as a physician to heal him by medicines, but as an apostle to heal him by miracle, and he prayed to God in Christ's name for his cure, and then *laid his hands* on him, and he was perfectly well in an instant. Though he must needs be in years, yet he recovered his health, and the lengthening out of life yet longer, would be a mercy to him.

4. The cure of many others, who were invited by this cure to apply themselves to Paul; if he can heal diseases so easily, so effectually, he shall soon have patients enow; and he *bid them all welcome*, and sent them away with what they came for. He did not plead that he was a stranger there, thrown accidentally among them, under no obligations to them, and waiting to be gone by the first opportunity, and therefore might be excused from receiving their applications: No, a good man will endeavour to do good wherever the providence of God casts him. Paul reckoned himself a debtor, not only to the Greeks, but to the Barbarians, and thanked God for an opportunity of being useful among them. Nay, he was particularly obliged to these inhabitants of Malta for the seasonable shelter and supply they had afforded him, and hereby he did in effect discharge his quarters; which should encourage us to *entertain strangers*, for some thereby have entertained *angels*, and some *apostles*, unawares; God will not be behind with any for kindness shewn to his people in distress. We have reason to think, that Paul with these cures preached the gospel to them, and that coming thus confirmed and recommended, it was generally embraced among them. And if so, never were any people so enriched by a shipwreck on their coasts as these Maltese were.

Fifthly, The grateful acknowledgment which even these barbarous people made of the kindness Paul had done them, in preaching Christ unto them. They were civil to him and to the other ministers that were with him, who it is likely were assisting to him in preaching among them, *ver. 7.*

1. They *honoured us with many honours*; they shewed them all possible respect; they saw God honoured them, and therefore justly thought themselves obliged to honour them; and thought nothing too much by which they might testify the esteem they had for them. Perhaps, they made them free of their island by naturalizing them, and admitted them members of their guilds and fraternities. The faithful preachers of the gospel are worthy of a double honour, then especially when they succeed in their labours.

2. *When we departed, they loaded us with such things as were necessary*; or, they *put on board* such things as we had occasion for. Paul could not labour with his hands here, for he had nothing to work upon, and therefore accepted the kindness of the good people of Melita, not as a fee for his cures, freely he had received, and freely he gave; but as the relief of his wants, and theirs that were with him. And having reaped of their spiritual things, it was but just they should make them those returns, *1 Cor. ix. 11.*

11. And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. 12. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days. 13. And from thence we set a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: 14. Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. 15. And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii-forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. 16. And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him.

We have here the progress of Paul's voyage towards Rome, and his arrival there at length; a rough and dangerous voyage he had had hitherto, and narrowly escaped with his life, but after a storm comes a calm, the latter part of his voyage was easy and quiet, *per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum Tendimus ad Latium;—tendimus ad Caelum—dabit Deus his quoque finem.* We have here,

First, Their leaving of Malta; that island was a happy shelter to them, but it was not their home; when they are refreshed they must to sea again. The difficulties and discouragements we have met with in our Christian course must not hinder us from pressing forward. Notice is here taken,

1. Of the time of their departure; *after three months*, the three *winter months*. Better lie by, though they lay upon charges, than go forward while the season was dangerous. Paul had warned them against venturing to sea in winter weather, and they would not take the warning, but now they had learned it by the difficulties and dangers they had gone through, he needed not to warn them; their learning did them good when they had paid dear for it. Experience is therefore called *the mistress of fools*, because

they are fools that will not learn till experience has taught them.

2. Of the ship in which they departed; it was in a ship of Alexandria; so was that which was cast away, *chap. xxvii. 6.* This ship had *wintered in that isle*, and was safe. See what different issues there are of mens undertakings in this world. Here were two ships, both of Alexandria, both bound for Italy, both thrown upon the same island, but one is wrecked there, and the other is saved; such occurrences may often be observed; providence sometimes favours those that deal in the world, and prospers them, that people may be encouraged to *set their hands* to worldly business; at other times providence crosseth them, that people may be warned not to *set their hearts* upon it. Events are thus varied that we may learn both *how to want*, and *how to abound*. The historian takes notice of the sign of the ship, which probably gave it its name, it was *Castor and Pollux*; those little foolish pagan deities, that the poets had made to preside over storms, and to protect seafaring men, as *gods of the sea*, were painted or graven upon the forepart of the ship, and from thence the ship took its name. I suppose this is observed for no other reason but for the better ascertaining of the story; that ship being well known by that name and sign, by all that dealt between Egypt and Italy. Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that Luke mentions this circumstance to intimate the mens superstition, that they hoped they should have better failing under this badge than they had had before.

Secondly, Their landing in or about Italy, and the pursuing of their journey towards Rome.

1. They landed first at Syracuse in Sicily, the chief city of that island; there they *tarried three days*, probably having some goods to put ashore, or some merchandize to make there; for it seems to have been a trading voyage that this ship made. Paul had now his curiosity gratified with the sight of places he had often heard of, and wished to see; particularly Syracuse, a place of great antiquity and note; and yet, it should seem, there were no Christians there.

2. From Syracuse, they came to Rhegium, a city in Italy, directly opposite to Messina in Sicily; belonging to the kingdom of Calabria or Naples; there it seems they stayed one day. And a very formal story the Romish legends tell of Paul's preaching here at this time, and the fish coming to the shore to hear him, that with a candle he set a stone pillar on fire, and by that miracle convinced the people of the truth of his doctrine, and they were many of them baptized, and he ordained Stephen, one of his companions in this voyage, to be their bishop; and all this they tell you was done in this one day; whereas it doth not appear that they did so much as go ashore, but only came to an anchor in the road.

3. From Rhegium they came to *Puteoli*, a seaport town not far from Naples now called Pozzolana; the ship of Alexandria was bound for that part, and therefore there Paul and the rest that were bound for Rome, were put ashore, and went the remainder of their way *by land*. At Puteoli, they *found brethren*, Christians; who brought the knowledge of Christ hither, we are not told, but here it was, so wonderfully did the leaven of the gospel diffuse its savour. God has many that serve and worship him in places where we little think he has. And, observe, 1. Though it is probable there were but few brethren in Puteoli, yet Paul found them out; either they heard of him, or he enquired them out, but as it were by instinct they got together. Brethren in Christ should find out one another, and keep up communion with each other, as those of the same country do in a foreign land. 2. They desired Paul and his companions to *tarry with them seven days*, i. e. to forecast to stay at least *one Lord's day* with them, and to assist them in their publick worship that day. They knew not whether ever they should see Paul at Puteoli again, and therefore he must not go but he must give them a sermon or two, or more. And Paul was willing to allow them so much of his time, and the centurion under whose command Paul now was, perhaps having himself friends or business at Puteoli, agreed to stay one week there, to oblige Paul.

4. From Puteoli they went forward towards Rome; whether they travelled on foot, or whether they had beasts provided for them to ride on, as *chap. xxiii. 24.* doth not appear; but to Rome they must go; and this is their last stage.

Thirdly, The meeting which the Christians at Rome gave to Paul; it is probable, notice was sent them by the Christians at Puteoli, as soon as ever Paul was come thither, how long he intended to stay there, and when he would set forward for Rome, which gave an opportunity for this interview. Observe,

1. The great honour they did to Paul; they had heard much of his fame, what use God had made of him, and what eminent service he had done to the kingdom of Christ in the world, and to what multitudes of souls he had been a spiritual father; they had heard of his sufferings, and how God had owned him in them, and therefore they not only longed to see him, but thought themselves obliged to shew him all possible respect, as a glorious advocate for the cause of Christ. He had some time ago written a long epistle to them, and a most excellent one, *the epistle to the Romans*, in which he had not only expressed his great kindness for them,

but

had given them a great many useful instructions, and in return for that they shew him this respect. They went to meet him, that they might bring him in state, as ambassadors and judges make their publick entry, though he was a prisoner. Some of them went as far as Appiisforum, which was fifty one miles from Rome; others, to a place called the three taverns, which was twenty eight miles, (some reckon thirty three miles) from Rome. They are to be commended for it, that they were so far from being ashamed of him, or afraid of owning him, because he was a prisoner, that for that very reason they counted him worthy of double honour, and were the more careful to shew him respect.

2. The great comfort Paul had in this; now he was drawing near to Rome, and, perhaps, heard at Putcoli what character the emperor Nero now had, and what a tyrant he was of late become, he began to have some melancholy thoughts about his appeal to Cesar, and the consequences of it; he was drawing near to Rome, where he had never been, where there were few that knew him, or that he knew, and what things may befall him here he cannot tell, but he begins to grow dull upon it, till he meets with these good people that came from Rome to shew him respect, and when he saw them, 1. He thanked God; we may suppose he thanked them for their civility, told them again and again how kindly he took it; but that was not all, he thanked God. Note, If our friends be kind to us, it is God that makes them so, that puts it into their hearts, and into the power of their hands to be so, and we must give him the glory of it. He thanked God no doubt for the civility and generosity of the barbarous people at Melita, but much more for the pious care of the Christian people at Rome for him. When he saw so many Christians that were of Rome, he thanked God that the gospel of Christ had had such wonderful success there in the metropolis of the empire. When we go abroad, or but look abroad into the world, and meet with those even in strange places that bear up Christ's name, and fear God and serve him, we should lift up our hearts to heaven in thanksgiving; blessed be God that there are so many excellent ones on this earth, as bad as it is. Paul had thanked God for the Christians at Rome before he had ever seen them, upon the report he had heard concerning them, Rom. i. 8. I thank my God for you all: But now he sees them, and, perhaps, they appeared more fashionable and genteel people than most he had conversed with, or more grave, serious and intelligent, than most, he thanked God. But that was not all, 2. He took courage; it put new life into him, cheered up his spirits, and banished his melancholy, and now he can enter Rome a prisoner, as cheerfully as ever he had entered Jerusalem at liberty. He finds there are those there who love and value him, and whom he may both converse with and consult with as his friends, which will take off much of the tediousness of his imprisonment, and the terror of his appearing before Nero. Note, It is an encouragement to those who are travelling towards heaven to meet with their fellow travellers, who are their companions in the kingdom, and patience of Jesus Christ. When we see the numerous and serious assemblies of good Christians, we should not only give thanks to God, but take courage to ourselves. And this is a good reason why respect should be shewn to good ministers, especially when they are in sufferings, and have contempt put upon them, that it encourageth them, and makes both their sufferings and their services more easy. Yet it is observable, that though the Christians at Rome were now so respectful to Paul, and he had promised himself so much from their respects, yet they failed him when he most needed them; for he saith, 2 Tim. iv. 16. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. They could easily take a ride of forty or fifty miles to go meet Paul, for the pleasantness of the journey; but to venture the displeasure of the emperor, and the disobliging of other great men by appearing in defence of Paul, and giving evidence for him, here they delude to be excused; when it comes to that, they will rather ride as far out of town to miss him, as now they did to meet him. Which is an intimation to us, to cease from man, and to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. The courage we take from his promises will never fail us, when we shall be ashamed of that which we took from mens compliments. Let God be true, but every man a liar.

Fourthly, The delivering of Paul into custody at Rome, ver. 16. He is now come to his journey's end. And,

1. He is still a prisoner; he had longed to see Rome, but when he comes there, he is delivered, with other prisoners, to the captain of the guard, and can see no more of Rome than he will permit him. How many great men had made their entry into Rome crowned and in triumph, who really were the plagues of their generation; but here is a good man makes his entry into Rome chained and triumphed over, as a poor captive, who was really the greatest blessing to his generation. This thought is enough to put one for ever out of conceit with this world.

2. Yet he has some favour shewed him; he is a prisoner, but not a close prisoner, not in the common jail, Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, in some convenient, private lodgings, which his friends there provided for him, and a soldier was appointed to be his guard, who, we hope, was civil to him, and let him take all the liberty that could be allowed to a prisoner; for he must be very ill-humoured indeed, that could be so to such a courteous, obliging man as Paul. Paul being suffered to dwell by himself, could the better enjoy him-

self, and his friends, and his God, than if he had been lodged with the other prisoners. Note, This may encourage God's prisoners, that he can give them favour in the eyes of those that carry them captives, Psal. cvi. 46. as Joseph in the eyes of his keeper, Gen. xxxix. 21. and Jehojachin in the eyes of the king of Babylon, 2 Kings xxv. 27, 28. When God doth not deliver his people presently out of bondage, yet if he either make it easy to them, or them easy under it, they have reason to be thankful.

17. And it came to pass, that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18. Who when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came, shewed or spake any harm of thee. 22. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

Paul with a great deal of expence and hazard is brought a prisoner to Rome, and when he is come, no body appears to prosecute him, or lay any thing to his charge; but he must call his own cause; and here he represents it to the chief of the Jews at Rome. It is not long since by an edict of Claudius all the Jews were banished from Rome, and kept out till his death; but in the five years since then, many Jews were come thither, for the advantage of trade, though it doth not appear that they were allowed any synagogue there, or place of publick worship; but those chief of the Jews, were those of best figure among them, the topping men of that religion, that had the best estates and interests. Paul called them together, being desirous to stand right in their opinion, and that there might be a good understanding between him and them. And here we are told,

First, What he said to them, and what account he gave them of his case; he speaks respectfully to them, calls them men and brethren, and thereby intimates that he expects to be treated by them both as a man and as a brother, and engageth to treat them as such, and to tell them nothing but the truth, for we are members one of another; all we are brethren. Now,

1. He professeth his own innocency, and that he had not given any just occasion to the Jews to bear him such an ill-will as generally they did. I have committed nothing against the people of the Jews, have done nothing to the prejudice of their religion or civil liberties, have added no affliction to their present miseries, they know I have not; nor have I committed any thing against the customs of our fathers; either by abrogating, or by innovating in religion. It is true Paul did not impose the customs of the fathers upon the Gentiles, they were never intended for them; but it is as true, that he never opposed them in the Jews; but did himself when he was among them, conform to them. He never quarrelled with them for practising according to the usages of their own religion, but only for their enmity to the Gentiles, Gal. ii. 12. Paul had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had done his duty to the Jews.

2. He modestly complains of the hard usage he had met with; that though he had given them no offence, yet he was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. If he had spoken the whole truth in this matter, it would have looked worse than it did upon the Jews, for they would have murdered him without any colour of law or justice, if the Romans had not protected him; but however, their accusing him as a criminal before Felix the governor, and demanding judgment against him, was in effect delivering him prisoner into the hands of the Romans, when he desired no more but a fair and impartial trial by their own law.

3. He declares the judgment of the Roman governors concerning him, ver. 18. They examined him, enquired into his case, heard what was to be said against him, and what he had to say for himself; the chief captain examined him, so did Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and they could find no cause of death in him; nothing appeared to the contrary but that he was an honest, quiet, conscientious, good man, and therefore they would never gratify the Jews with a sentence of death upon him; but, on the contrary, would have let him go, and have let him go on in his work too, and have given him no interruption, for they all heard him, and liked his doctrine well enough. It was for the honour of Paul, that those who most carefully examined his case acquitted him, and

none condemned him but unheard, and such as were prejudiced against him.

4. He pleads the necessity he was under to remove himself and his cause to Rome; and that it was only in his own defence, and not with any design to recriminate, or exhibit a cross bill against the complainants, *ver. 19. When the Jews spake against it, and entered a caveat against his discharge, designing, if they could not have him condemned to die, yet to have him a prisoner for life, he was constrained to appeal unto Cesar, finding that the governors, one after another, stood so much in awe of the Jews, that they would not discharge him for fear of making them their enemies; which made it necessary for him to pray the assistance of the higher powers. This was all he aimed at in this appeal; not to accuse his nation, but only to vindicate himself. Every man has a right to plead in his own defence, who yet ought not to find fault with his neighbours. It is an invidious thing to accuse, especially to accuse a nation, such a nation, Paul made intercession for them, but never against them. The Roman government had at this time an ill opinion of the Jewish nation, as factious, turbulent, disaffected and dangerous, and it had been an easy thing for a man with such a fluent tongue as Paul had, a citizen of Rome, and so injured as he was, to have exasperated the emperor against the Jewish nation, but Paul would not for ever so much do such a thing, he was for making the best of every body, and not making ill worse.*

5. He puts his sufferings upon the true foot, and gives them such an account of the reason of them, as should engage them not only not to join with his persecutors against him, but to concern themselves for him, and to do what they could on his behalf, if they had any interest to procure him his liberty, *ver. 20. For this cause I have called for you, not to quarrel with you, for I have no design to incense the government against you, but to see you, and speak with you as my countrymen, and men that I would keep up a correspondence with, because that for the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain. He carried the mark of his imprisonment about with him, and, probably, was chained to the soldier that kept him; and it was, 1. Because he preached, that the Messiah was come, who was the hope of Israel, he whom Israel hoped for. Do not all the Jews agree in this, that the Messiah will be the glory of his people Israel, and therefore he is to be hoped for, and this Messiah I preach, and prove he is come. They would keep up such a hope of a Messiah yet to come, as must end in a despair of him; I preach such a hope in a Messiah already come, as must produce a joy in him. 2. Because he preached, that the resurrection of the dead would come; that also was the hope of Israel; so he had called it, chap. xxiii. 6. xxiv. 15. xxvi. 6, 7. They would have you still expect a Messiah that would free you from the Roman yoke, and make you great and prosperous upon earth, and that is it that fills them; and they are angry at me for directing their expectations to the great things of another world, and persuading them to embrace a Messiah, who will secure those to them, and not external power and grandeur; I am for bringing you to the spiritual and eternal blessedness which our fathers by faith had their eye upon, and that is it that they hate me for; because I would take you off from that which is the cheat of Israel, and will be its shame and ruin, the notion of a temporal Messiah, and lead you to that which is the true and real hope of Israel, and the genuine sense of all the promises made to the fathers, a spiritual kingdom of holiness and love set up in the hearts of men, to be the pledge of, and preparative for the joyful resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.*

Secondly, What was their reply; they own,

1. That they had *nothing to say in particular against him*; nor had any instructions to appear as his prosecutors before the emperor, either by letter or word of mouth, *ver. 21. We have neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, have no orders to prosecute thee; neither any of the brethren of the Jewish nation that have lately come up to Rome (as many occasions drew the Jews thither now their nation was a province of the empire,) have shewed or spoke any harm of thee. This was very strange, that that restless and inveterate rage of the Jews which had followed Paul wherever he went, should not follow him to Rome, to get him condemned there: And some think they told a lye here, and had orders to prosecute him, but durst not own it, being themselves obnoxious to the emperor's displeasure; who though he had not like his predecessors banished them all from Rome, yet he gave them no countenance there. But I am apt to think what they said was true, and Paul now found he had gained the point he aimed at in appealing to Cesar, which was to remove his cause into a court to which they durst not follow it; this was David's policy, and it was his security, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. *There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines, and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coasts of Israel, so shall I escape out of his hand, and it proves so, ver. 4. When Saul heard that David was fled to Gath, he sought no more again for him. Thus did Paul by his appeal, he fled to Rome where he was out of their reach; and they said, even let him go.**

2. That they desired to know more particularly concerning the doctrine he preached, and the religion he took so much pains to propagate in the face of so much opposition, *ver. 22. We desire to hear*

of thee what thou thinkest, & perceive, what thy opinions or sentiments are, what are those things which thou art so wise about, and hast such a relish of, and such a zeal for; for though we know little else concerning Christianity, we know it is a sect every where spoken against. Those who said this scornful, spiteful word of the Christian religion, were Jews, the chief of the Jews at Rome, who boasted of their knowledge, Rom. ii. 17. and yet this was all they knew concerning the Christian religion, that it was a sect every where spoken against. They put it into an ill name, and then run it down: 1. They looked upon it to be a sect, and that was false. True Christianity establishes that which is of common concern to all mankind, and is not built upon such narrow opinions, and private interests as sects commonly owe their original to. It aims at no worldly benefit or advantage, as sects do; but all its gains are spiritual and eternal. And besides, it has a direct tendency to the uniting the children of men, and not the dividing of them, and setting them at variance, as sects have. 2. They said, it was every where spoken against, and that was too true; all that they conversed with spoke against it, and therefore they concluded every body did; most indeed did. It is, and always has been the lot of Christ's holy religion, to be every where spoken against.

23. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet, unto our fathers, 26. Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. 27. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

We have here a short account of a long conference which Paul had with the Jews at Rome about the Christian religion. Though they were so far prejudiced against it, because it was *every where spoken against*, as to call it a sect, yet they were willing to give it a hearing; which was more than the Jews at Jerusalem would do: It is probable, these Jews at Rome, being men of larger acquaintance with the world, and more general conversation, were more free in their enquiries than the bigotted Jews at Jerusalem were; and would not answer this matter before they heard it.

First, We are here told how Paul managed this conference in defence of the Christian religion. The Jews appointed the time, a day was set for this dispute, that all parties concerned might have sufficient notice, *ver. 23. Those Jews seemed well-disposed to receive conviction, and yet it did not prove that they all were so. Now when the day came,*

1. There were *many got together to Paul*; though he was prisoner and could not come out to them, yet they were willing to come to him to his lodging. And the confinement he was now under, if duly considered, instead of prejudicing them against his doctrine, ought to confirm it to them; for it was a sign not only that he believed it, but that he thought it worth suffering for. One would visit such a man as Paul in his prison, rather than not have instruction from him. And he *made room for them in his lodging*, not fearing giving offence to the government, so he might do good to them.

2. He was very large and full in his discourse with them; seeking their conviction more than his own vindication. 1. He expounded, or explained the *kingdom of God* to them, shewed them the nature of that kingdom, and the glorious purposes and designs of it, that it is heavenly and spiritual, seated in the minds of men, and shines not in external pomp, but in purity of heart and life. That which kept the Jews in their unbelief was a misunderstanding of the *kingdom of God*, as if it came *with observation*, let but that be expounded to them, and set in a *true light*, and they will be brought into obedience to it. 2. He not only *expounded the kingdom of God*, but he testified it, plainly declared to them, and confirmed it by uncontested proofs that the kingdom of God by the Messiah's administration was come, and was now set up in the world. He attested the extraordinary powers in the kingdom of grace by which it was *set up*, and the *miracles* in the kingdom of nature, by which it was confirmed. He bore his testimony to it from his own experience of its power and influence upon him, and the manner of his

his being brought into subjection to it, (3.) He not only expounded and testified the kingdom of God, but he persuaded them, urged it upon their consciences, and pressed them with all earnestness to embrace the kingdom of God, and submit to it, and not to persist in an opposition to it. He followed his doctrine, the explication and confirmation of it with a warm and lively application to his hearers, which is the most proper, profitable method of preaching. 4. He persuaded them *concerning Jesus*; the design and tendency of his whole discourse was to bring them to Christ, to convince them of his being the Messiah; and to engage them to believe in him as he is offered in the gospel. He urged upon them, *τα πρὸς τὴν ἰσχυρίαν, the things concerning Jesus*, the prophecies of him, which he read to them *out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets*, as pointing at the Messiah, and shewed how they had all had their accomplishment in this Jesus. They being Jews he dealt with them out of the scriptures of the Old Testament, and demonstrated that these were so far from making against Christianity, that they were the great proofs of it; so that if we compare the history of the New Testament, with the prophecy of the Old, we must conclude that this Jesus is *he that should come*, and we are *to look for no other*.

3. He was very long; for he continued his discourse, and it should seem to have been a continued discourse, from *morning till evening*; perhaps it was a discourse eight or ten hours long. The subject was curious, he was full of it, it was of vast importance, he was in good earnest, and his heart was upon it, he knew not when he should have such another opportunity, and therefore without begging pardon for tiring their patience, he kept them all day; but, it is likely, he spent some of the time in prayer with them, and for them.

Secondly, What was the effect of this discourse; one would have thought so good a cause as that of Christianity, and managed by such a *skilful hand* as Paul's, could not but carry the day, and that all the hearers should have yielded to it presently; but it did not prove so; the child Jesus is *set for the fall* of some, and the *rising again* of others, a foundation-stone to some, and a stone of stumbling to others.

1. They did not *agree among themselves*, ver. 25. Some of them thought Paul was in the right, others would not admit it. This is that division which Christ came to send; that fire which he came to kindle, *Luke xii. 49, 51*. Paul preached with a great deal of plainness and clearness, and yet his hearers could not agree about the sense and evidence of what he preached.

2. *Some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not*, ver. 24. There was the disagreement: such as this has always been the success of the gospel, to some it has been a *savour of life unto life*, to others a *savour of death unto death*. Some are wrought upon by the word, and others hardened; some receive the light, and others shut their eyes against it. So it was among Christ's hearers, and the spectators of his miracles, some believed, and some blasphemed. If all had believed, there had been no disagreement; so that all the blame of the division lay upon those who would not believe.

Thirdly, The awakening word which Paul said to them at parting; he perceived by what they muttered that there were many among them, and perhaps the greater part, that were obstinate and would not yield to the conviction of what he said; and they were getting up to be gone, they had had enough of it; hold, faith Paul, take one word with you before you go, and consider of it when you come home; what do you think will be the effect of your obstinate infidelity? What will ye do in the end hereof? What will it come to?

1. You will by the righteous judgment of God be *sealed up under unbelief*; you harden your own hearts, and God will harden them, as he did Pharaoh's; and this is what was prophesied of concerning you. Turn to that scripture, *Isa. vi. 9, 10*. and read it seriously, and tremble, lest the case there described should prove to be your case. As there are in the Old Testament gospel promises, which will be accomplished in all that believe; so there are gospel threatnings, of spiritual judgment which will be fulfilled in them that *believe not*; and this is one. It is part of the commission given to Isaiah the prophet, he is sent to make those worse, that would not be made better: *Well spake the holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers*; what was spoken by J E H O V A H, is here said to be spoken by the holy Ghost, which proves that the holy Ghost is God; and what was spoken to Isaiah, is here said to be spoken by him to their fathers; for he was ordered to *tell the people* what God said to him; and though what is there said had in it much of terror to the people, and grief to the prophet, yet it is here said to be well spoken; Hezekiah said concerning a message of wrath, *good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken*, *Isa. xxxix. 8*. And *he that believes not shall be damned* is gospel, as well as *he that believes shall be saved*, *Mark xvi. 16*. Or, this may be explained by that of our Saviour, *Mat. xv. 7*. *Well did Esaias prophesy of you*. The holy Ghost said to your fathers, that which would be fulfilled in you, *bearing ye shall bear, and shall not understand*.

1. That which was their great sin against God, is yours; and that is this, *you will not see*: you shut your eyes against the most convincing evidence possible, and will not admit the

conclusion, though you cannot deny the premises, *your eyes you have closed*, ver. 27. That speaks an obstinate infidelity, and a willing slavery to prejudice. As your fathers would not see God's hand *lifted up against them* in his judgments, *Isa. xvi. 11*. so you will not see God's hand *stretched out to you* in gospel grace. It was true of these unbelieving Jews, that they were prejudiced against the gospel, they *did not see*, because they were resolved they would not; and none so blind as they that will not see. They would prosecute their convictions, and for that reason would not admit them. They have purposely *closed their eyes*, lest they should see *with their eyes* the great things which belong to their everlasting peace; should see the glory of God, the amiableness of Christ, the deformity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of this world, and the reality of another; they will not be changed and governed by those truths, and therefore will not receive the evidence of them; *lest they should hear with their ears* that which they are loth to hear, the wrath of God revealed from heaven against them, and the will of God revealed from heaven to them: They *stop their ears*, like the *deaf adder*, that will not *bearken to the voice of the charmer*, *charm be never so wisely*. Thus their fathers did, they would not hear, *Zech. vii. 11, 12*. And that which they are afraid of in shutting up their eyes and ears, and barricading (as it were) both their learning senses against him that *made both the hearing ear, and the seeing eye*, is, *lest they should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*. They kept their mind in the dark, or at least in a constant confusion and tumult, lest if they should admit a considerate sober thought, they should *understand with their heart* how much it is both their duty and their interest to be religious, and so by degrees the truth should be too hard for them, and *they should be converted* from the evil ways which they take pleasure in, to those exercises which they have now an aversion to. Observe, God's method is to bring people first to see and hear, and so to *understand with their hearts*, and then to convert them, and bow their wills, and so heal them, which is the regular way of dealing with a rational soul: and therefore Satan prevents the conversion of souls to God, by *blinding the mind*, and *darkning the understanding*, *2 Cor. iv. 4*. And the case is very sad when the sinner *joins with him* herein and *puts out his own eyes*, *ut liberius peccent libenter ignorant*. They are in love with their disease, and are afraid lest God should heal them; like Babylon of old, we would have healed her, and she would not be healed, *Jer. li. 9*. This was the sin.

(2.) That which was the great judgment of God upon them for this sin, is his *judgment upon you*, and that is, *you shall be blind*. God will give you up to a judicial infatuation; *bearing ye shall bear*, you shall have the word of God preached to you over and over, but *you shall not understand* it, because you will not give your minds to understand it, God will not give you strength and grace to understand it: *seeing ye shall see*; you shall have abundance of miracles and signs done before your eyes, but *you shall not perceive* the convincing evidence of them. Take heed lest it be true of you, what Moses said to your fathers, *Deut. xxix. 4*. *The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day*. And what Isaiah said to the men of his generation, *Isa. xxix. 10, 11, 12*. *The Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes*. What with their resisting the grace of God, and rebelling against the light, and God's withdrawing and withholding his grace and light from them; what with their *not receiving the love of the truth*, and God's *giving them up* for that to *strong delusions to believe a lie*; what with their wilful, and what with their judicial hardness *the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing*; they are stupid and senseless, and not wrought upon by all that can be said to them; no physick that can be given them operates upon them, or will reach them, and therefore their disease must be adjudged incurable, and their case desperate. How should they be happy that will not be healed of a disease that makes them miserable? And how should they be healed, that will not be converted to the use of the methods of cure? And how should they be converted, that will not be convinced either of their disease or of their remedy? And how should they be convinced that *shut their eyes and stop their ears*? Let all that hear the gospel, and do not heed it, tremble at this doom; for when once they are thus given up to hardness of heart, they are already in the suburbs of hell; for who shall heal them, if God do not?

2. Your unbelief will *justify God in sending the gospel to the Gentile world*, which is the thing you look upon with such a jealous eye, ver. 28. therefore seeing you put the grace of God away from you, and will not submit to the power of divine truth and love, seeing you will not be *converted and healed* in the methods which divine wisdom has appointed, *therefore be it known unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles*, that salvation which was of the Jews only. *John iv. 22*. the offer of it is made to them, the means of it afforded to them, and they stand fairer for it than you do: it is sent to them, and they will hear it, and receive it, and be happy in it.

Now Paul designs hereby,

1. To abate their displeasure at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, by shewing them the absurdity of it; they were angry that the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, and thought it was too great a favour done to them; but if they thought that salvation of so small a value as not to be worthy of their acceptance, surely they could not grudge it the Gentiles, as too good for them, or envy them for it! The salvation of God is sent into the world, the Jews had the first offer of it, it was fairly proposed to them, it was earnestly pressed upon them, but they refused it, they would not accept the invitation which was given to them first to the wedding-feast, and therefore must thank themselves if other guests be invited: If they will not strike the bargain, nor come up to the terms, they ought not to be angry at those that will: They cannot complain that the Gentiles took it over their heads, or out of their hands, for they had quite laid their hands off it; nay, they had lift up the heel against it; and therefore it is their fault; for it is through their fall that salvation is come to the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 11.

2. To improve their displeasure at the favour done to the Gentiles to their advantage, and to bring good out of that evil; for when he had spoken of this very thing in his epistle to the Romans, the benefit which the Gentiles had by the unbelief and rejection of the Jews, he saith, he took notice of it on purpose that he might provoke his dear countrymen the Jews to a holy emulation, and might save some of them, Rom. xi. 14. The Jews have rejected the gospel of Christ, and kicked it off to the Gentiles, but it is not yet too late to repent of their refusal, and to accept of the salvation which they did make light of; they may say no, and take it; as the elder brother in the parable, that, when he was bidden to go work in the vineyard, first said, I will not; and yet afterwards repented, and went, Matt. xxi. 29. Is the gospel sent to the Gentiles? let us go after it, rather than come short of it: And will they hear it, who were thought to be out of hearing, and had been so long like the idols they worshipped, that have ears, and hear not? and shall not we hear it, whose privilege it is to have God so nigh to us, in all that we call upon him for? Thus he would have them to argue, and to be shamed into the belief of the gospel, by the welcome it met with among the Gentiles: And if it had not that effect upon them, it would aggravate their condemnation, as it did that of the Scribes and Pharisees, that, when they saw the publicans and harlots submit to John's baptism, they did not afterwards thereupon repent of their folly, that they might believe him, Matt. xxi. 32.

Fourthly, The breaking up of the assembly, as it should seem, in some disorder.

1. They turned their backs upon Paul; those of them that believed not, were extremely nettled at that last word which he said, that they should be judicially blinded, and that the light of the gospel should shine among them that sat in darkness; when Paul had said these words, he had said enough for them, and they departed, perhaps, not so much enraged as some others of their nation had been upon the like occasion, but stupid and unconcerned, no more affected, either with those terrible words in the close of his discourse, or all the comfortable words he had spoken before, than the seats they sat on; they departed many of them with a resolution never to hear Paul preach again, nor trouble themselves with further enquiries about this matter.

2. They set their faces one against another; for they had great disputes among themselves; there was not only a quarrel between them which believed, and them which believed not, but even among them which believed not there were debates; they that agreed to depart from Paul, yet agreed not in the reasons why they departed, but had great reasoning among themselves: Many have great reasoning, that yet do not reason right; can find fault with one anothers opinions, and yet not yield to truth: Nor will mens reasoning among themselves convince them, without the grece of God to open their understandings.

30. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31. Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

We are here taking our leave of the history of blessed Paul, and therefore, since God saw it not fit we should know any more of him, we would carefully take notice of every particular of the circumstances in which we must here leave him.

First, It cannot but be a trouble to us, that we must leave him in bonds for Christ, nay, and that we have no prospect given us of his being set at liberty: Two whole years of that good man's life are here spent in confinement, and, for ought appears, he was never enquired after of all that time by those whose prisoner he was; he appealed to Cesar, in hope of a speedy discharge from his imprisonment, the governors having signified to his imperial majesty concerning the prisoner, that he had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, and yet he is continued a prisoner: So little reason have we to trust in men, especially despised prisoners in great men! witness Joseph's case, whom the chief butler remembered not,

but forgot, Gen. xl. 23. Yet some think, that though it be not mentioned here, yet it was in the first of these two years, and early too in that year, that he was first brought before Nero, and then his bonds in Christ were manifest in Cesar's court, as he saith, Phil. i. 13. And at that first answer it was that no man stood by him, 2 Tim. iv. 16. But, it seems, instead of being set at liberty upon his appeal, as he expected, he hardly escaped out of the emperor's hands with his life; he calls it a deliverance out of the mouth of the lion, 2 Tim. iv. 17. and his speaking there of his first answer, intimates, that since that he had a second, in which he had come off better, and yet was not discharged. During these two years imprisonment he wrote his epistle to the Galatians, then his second epistle to Timothy, then those to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, in which he mentions several things particularly concerning his imprisonment, and lastly, his epistle to the Hebrews, just after he was set at liberty, as Timothy also was, who, coming to visit him, was, upon some account or other, made his fellow-prisoner; (with him writes Paul to the Hebrews, xiii. 23. if he come shortly, I will see you;) but how, or by what means he obtained his liberty, we are not told; only that two years he was a prisoner. Tradition saith, that after his discharge he went from Italy to Spain, thence to Crete, and so with Timothy into Judea, and from thence went to visit the churches in Asia, and at length came a second time to Rome, and there was beheaded in the last year of Nero. But Baronius himself owns, that there is no certainty of any thing concerning him, betwixt his release from this imprisonment, and his martyrdom; but it is said by some, that Nero having, when he begun to play the tyrant, set himself against the Christians, and persecuted them (and he was the first of the emperors that made a law against them, as Tertullian saith, Apol. cap. v.) the church at Rome was much weakened by that persecution, and that brought Paul the second time to Rome, to re-establish the church there, and to comfort the souls of the disciples that were left, and so he fell a second time into Nero's hand. And Chrysostom relates, that a young woman that was one of Nero's misses (to speak modestly) being converted, by Paul's preaching, to the Christian faith, and so brought off from that lewd course of life she had lived, Nero was incensed against Paul for that, and ordered him first to be imprisoned, and then put to death.

But, to keep to this short account here given of it,

1. It would grieve one to think that such a useful man as Paul was should be so long in restraint; two years he was a prisoner under Felix, chap. xxiv. 27. and, besides all the time that passed between that and his coming to Rome, he is here two years more a prisoner under Nero: How many churches might Paul have planted, how many cities and nations might he have brought over to Christ in these five years time (for so much it was at least) if he had been at liberty? But God is wise, and will shew that he is no debtor to the most useful instruments he employs, but can, and will, carry on his own interest, both without their services, and by their sufferings: Even Paul's bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. i. 12, 14.

2. Yet even Paul's imprisonment was in some respect a kindness to him, for these two years he dwelt in his own hired house, and that was more, for ought I know, than ever he had done before; he had always used to be a sojourner in the houses of others, now he has got a house of his own, his own, while he pays the rent for it; and such a retirement as this, would be a refreshment to one who had been all his days an itinerant; he had used to be always upon the remove, seldom stayed long at a place, but now he lived for two years in the same house; so that the bringing of him into this prison, was like Christ's call to his disciples to come into a desert place, and rest a while, Mark vi. 31. When he was at liberty, he was in continual fear, by reason of the lying in wait of the Jews, Acts xx. 19. but now his prison was his castle. Thus, out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.

Secondly, Yet it is a pleasure to us, for we are sure it was to him, that though we leave him in bonds for Christ, yet we leave him at work for Christ; and this made his bonds easy, that he was not by them bound out from serving God, and doing good; his prison becomes a temple, a church, and then it is to him a palace; his hands are tied, but, thanks be to God, his mouth is not stopped; a faithful, zealous minister can better bear any hardship than being silenced; here is Paul a prisoner, and yet a preacher; he is bound, but the word of the Lord is not bound. When he wrote his epistle to the Romans, he said, he longed to see them, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, Rom. i. 11. he was glad to see some of them, ver. 15. but it would not be half his joy, unless he could impart to them some spiritual gift, which here he has an opportunity to do, and then he will not complain of his confinement. Observe,

1. Whom he preacheth to; to all that had a mind to hear him, whether Jews, or Gentiles: Whether he had liberty to go to other houses to preach, doth not appear; it is likely not; but whoever would had liberty to come to his house to hear, and they were welcome; he received all that came to him. Note, Ministers doors should be open to such as desire to receive instruction from them, and they should be glad of an opportunity to advise those that are in care about their souls. Paul could not preach in

a synagogue, or any publick place of meeting that was sumptuous and capacious, but he preached in a poor cottage of his own. Note, When we cannot do what we would in the service of God, we must do what we can. Those ministers that have but little hired houses, should rather preach in them, if they may be allowed to do that, than be silent. *He received all that came to him,* and was not afraid of the greatest, nor ashamed of the meanest: He was ready to preach on the first day of the week to Christians, on the seventh day to Jews, and to who would on any day of the week; and he might hope the better to speed, because *they came in unto him*, which supposed a desire to be instructed, and a willingness to learn; and where these are, it is probable, some good may be done.

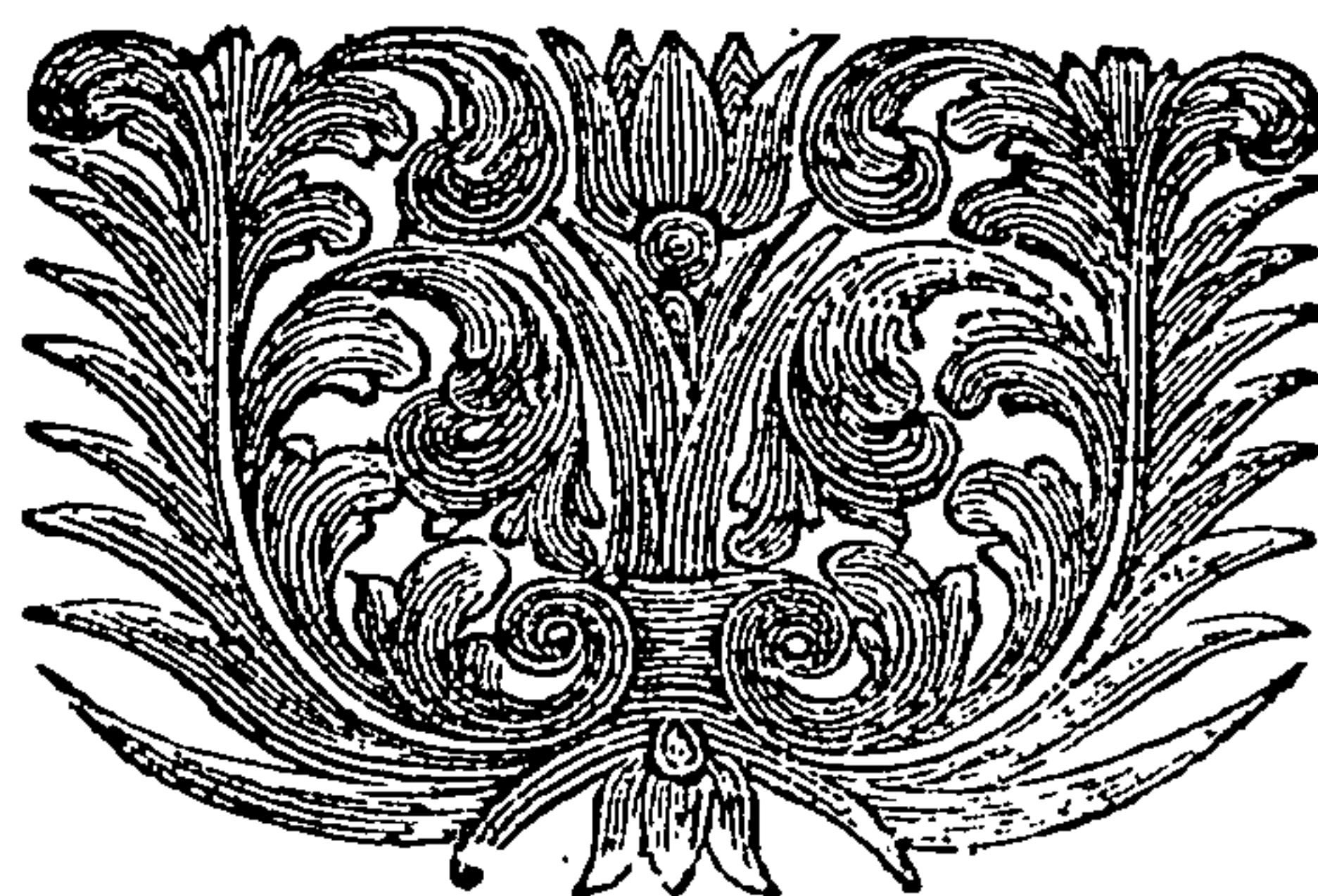
2. What he preached; he doth not fill their heads with curious speculations, or with matters of state and politicks, but he keeps to his text, minds his business as an apostle. 1. He is God's ambassador, and therefore *preacheth the kingdom of God*, doth all he can to preach it up; negotiates the affairs of it, in order to the advancing of all its true interests; he meddles not with the affairs of the kingdoms of men, let those treat of them whose work it is, he *preacheth the kingdom of God* among men, and the word of that kingdom; the same that he defended in his publick disputes, *testifying the kingdom of God*, ver. 23. he enforced in his publick preaching, as that which, if received aright, will make us all wise and good, wiser and better, which is the end of preaching. 2. He is an agent for Christ, a friend of the bridegroom, and therefore *teacheth those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*; the whole history of Christ, his incarnation, doctrine, life, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension; all that relates to the mystery of godliness: Paul stuck still to his principle, to know and preach nothing but Christ, and him crucified. Ministers, when in their preaching they are tempted to divert from that which is their main business, should reduce themselves with this question, What doth this concern the Lord Jesus Christ? What tendency has it to bring us to him, and to keep us walking in him? for *we preach not ourselves, but Christ*.

3. With what liberty he preacheth.

1. Divine grace gave him a liberty of spirit; he preached *with all confidence*, as one that was himself well assured of the truth of what he preached, and that it was what he durst stand by, and of the worth of it, that it was what he durst suffer for: He was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*.

2. Divine providence gave him a liberty of speech; *no man forbidding him*, giving him any check for what he did, or laying any restraint upon him; the Jews that used to forbid him to speak to the Gentiles, had no authority here; and the Roman government, as yet, took no cognizance of the profession of Christianity as a crime. Herein we must acknowledge the hand of God, 1. Setting bounds to the rage of persecutors; where he doth not turn the heart, yet he can tie the hand, and bridle the tongue. Nero was a bloody man, and there were many, both Jews and Gentiles, in Rome that hated Christianity; and yet so it was, unaccountably, that Paul, though a prisoner, was connived at in preaching the gospel, and it was not construed a breach of the peace. Thus God makes *the wrath of men to praise him, and restrains the remainder of it*, Psalm lxxvi. 10. Though there were so many that had it in their power to forbid Paul's preaching, even the common soldier that kept him might have done it, yet God so ordered it, *that no man did forbid him*. 2. See God here providing comfort for the relief of the persecuted: Though it was a very low and narrow sphere of opportunity that Paul was here placed in, compared with what he had been in, yet, such as it was, he was not molested or disturbed in it: Though it was not a wide door that was opened to him, yet it was kept open, and no man was suffered to shut it, and it was to many an effectual door, so *that there were saints even in Cesar's household*, Phil. iv. 22. When the city of our solemnities is thus made a quiet habitation at any time, and we are fed from day to day with the bread of life, *no man forbidding us*, we must give thanks to God for it, and prepare for changes; still longing for *that holy mountain, in which there shall never be any pricking brier, or grieving thorn*.

The end of the ACTS of the apostles.



AN EXPOSITION

Of the Several EPISTLES

Contained in the

NEW TESTAMENT,

VIZ.

<i>Romans,</i>	<i>II. Thessalonians,</i>	<i>I. Peter,</i>
<i>I. Corinthians,</i>	<i>I. Timothy,</i>	<i>II. Peter,</i>
<i>II. Corinthians,</i>	<i>II. Timothy,</i>	<i>I. John,</i>
<i>Galatians,</i>	<i>Titus,</i>	<i>II. John,</i>
<i>Ephesians,</i>	<i>Philemon,</i>	<i>III. John,</i>
<i>Philippians,</i>	<i>Hebrews,</i>	<i>Jude, and the</i>
<i>Colossians,</i>	<i>James,</i>	<i>Revelation.</i>
<i>I. Thessalonians,</i>		

WHEREIN

Each CHAPTER is summed up in its CONTENTS; the sacred Text inserted at large in distinct paragraphs; each paragraph reduced to its proper Heads; the sense given, and largely illustrated:

WITH

Practical Remarks and Observations.

By *MATTHEW HENRY*,
late Minister of the Gospel.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON in *Ludgate-street*, THOMAS COX under the *Royal-Exchange*,
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and THOMAS LONGMAN in *Pater Noster Row*. 1738.

THE P R E F A C E.



AFTER much expectation and many enquiries, the last volume of the late reverend Mr. HENRY'S *Exposition* now appears in the world. The common disadvantages that attend posthumous productions will doubtless be discerned in this; but we hope, though there are *diversities of gifts*, there will be found to be the *same Spirit*. Some of the relations and hearers of that excellent person have been at the pains of transcribing the notes they took in short-hand, of this part of the holy scripture, when expounded by him in his family, or in the congregation; and they have furnished us with very good materials for the finishing this great work: and we doubt not, but that the ministers who have been concerned in it have made that use of those assistances, as may entitle this compofure to the honour of Mr. HENRY'S name; and if so, they can very willingly conceal their own.

THE New Testament may be very properly divided into two parts, the one *Historical*, the other *Epistolary*. It is the exposition of the latter we now recommend; and shall offer some thoughts of the epistolary way of writing in general, and then proceed to observe the divine authority of these epistles, together with the style, matter, method, and design of them; leaving what might be said concerning the several inspired penmen, to the prefaces appertaining to the particular epistles.

As to the *Epistolary* way of writing, it may be sufficient to observe, it has usually three properties. It may in some things be more *difficult* to be understood, but then it is very *profitable* and very *pleasant*: these will be found to be the properties of these sacred letters. We shall meet with things not easy to be understood, especially in some parts of them, where we cannot so well discover the particular occasions on which they were written, or the questions or matters of fact to which they refer: but this is abundantly compensated by the profit which will accrue to those that read them with due attention; they will find the strongest reasoning, the most moving exhortations, and warm and pressing exhortations, mixed with seasonable cautions and reproofs, which are all admirably fitted to impress the mind with suitable sentiments and affections. And how much solid pleasure and delight must this afford to persons of a serious and religious spirit, especially when they wisely and faithfully apply to themselves what they find to suit their case? Thus they will appear to be as truly written to them, as if their names were superscribed on them. It is natural for us to be very much pleased in perusing a wise and kind letter, full of instruction and comfort, sent unto us by an absent friend: how then should we prize this part of *holy scripture*, when we consider herein that our God and Saviour has written these letters to us, in which we have the *great things of his law* and gospel, the things that belong to our peace? By these means not only the holy apostles *being dead yet speak*, but the Lord of the prophets and apostles continues to speak and write to us; and while we read them with proper affections, and follow them with suitable petitions and thanksgiving, a blessed correspondence and intercourse will be kept up between heaven and us, while we are yet sojourners in the earth.

BUT it is the *divine inspiration and authority* of these epistles we are especially concerned to know; and it is of the last importance, that in this our minds be fully established. And we have strong and clear evidence, that these epistles were written by the apostles of our Lord Jesus, and that they (as the prophets of the Old Testament) *spoke and wrote as they were moved by the holy Ghost*. These epistles have in all ages of the church been received by Christians as a part of those *holy scriptures that are given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, and are able to make us wise to salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ*; they are part of that perpetual, universal rule of faith and life, which contains doctrines and revelations we are bound to believe with a divine faith, as coming from the God of truth, and duties to be practised by us in obedience to the will of God, *acknowledging that the things written therein are the commandments of God*, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. And for the same reasons we acknowledge the other parts of the bible to be the word of God, we must own these to be so too.

IF there be good reason (as indeed there is) to believe that the books of *Moses* were written by inspiration of God, there is the same reason to believe that the writings of the *prophets* were also from God; because the law and the prophets speak the same things, and such things, as none but the holy Ghost could teach: and if we must with a divine faith believe the *Old Testament* to be a revelation from God, we cannot with any good reason question the divine authority of the *New*, when we consider how exactly the histories of the one agree with the prophecies of the other, and how the dark types and shadows of the law are illustrated and accomplished in the gospel.

The PREFACE.

NOR can any person who pretends to believe the divine authority of the *historical* part of the New Testament, containing the *gospels* and the *acts*, with good reason question the equal authority of the *epistolary* part; for the subject-matter of all these epistles, as well as of the sermons of the apostles, is the *word of God*, Rom. x. 17. 1 Thess. ii. 13. Col. i. 25. and the *gospel of God*, Rom. xv. 16. 2 Cor. xi. 7. and the *gospel of Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 12.

WE are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and as Moses wrote of Christ, so did all the prophets, for the Spirit of Christ in them did testify of him. And the apostles confirmed what Christ himself began to teach, God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the holy ghost, according to his will. Heb. ii. 3, 4. The manifestation of God in the flesh, and the things he began both to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up, together with his sufferings unto death, and his resurrection, (which things are declared to us, and are firmly to be believed, and strictly regarded by us) do give us an ample account of the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ: but still it was the will of our blessed Lord, that his apostles should not only publish his gospel to all the world, but also that after his resurrection, they should declare some things more plainly concerning him than he thought fit to do while he was here on earth; for which end he promised to send his holy Spirit to teach them all things, to bring all things to their remembrance, which he had spoken unto them, John xiv. 26. For he told them, John xvi. 12, 13. I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; but when he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall lead you into all truth, and shall shew you things to come.

ACCORDINGLY we find there was a wonderful effusion of the holy Spirit upon the apostles (who in these epistles are called the servants, ambassadors and ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God) under whose infallible guidance they preached the gospel, and declared the whole counsel of God, and that with amazing courage and success, Satan every where falling down before them like lightning from heaven.

THAT in preaching the gospel they were under the influence of the infallible Spirit, is undeniable, from the miraculous gifts and powers they received for their work, particularly that gift of tongues, so necessary for the publication of the gospel throughout the world to nations of different languages; nor must we omit that mighty power that accompanied the word preached, bringing multitudes to the obedience of faith, notwithstanding all opposition from earth and hell, and the potent lusts in the hearts of those who were turned from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus that delivered us from the wrath to come.

NOW that they were under the same mighty influence in writing these epistles as in preaching, cannot be denied. Such infallible assistance seems to be as needful at least to direct their writing as their preaching, considering that these epistles were written to remind them of those things that had been delivered by word of mouth, 2 Pet. i. 15. and to rectify the mistakes that might arise about some expressions that had been used in preaching, 2 Thess. ii. 2. and were to remain with them as a standing rule and record to which they were to appeal, for defending the truth and discovering error, and a proper means to transmit the truths of the gospel to posterity, even to the end of time.

BESIDES, the writers of these epistles have declared that what they wrote was from God: now they must know whether they had the special assistance of the divine Spirit or no, in their writing as well as preaching; and they in all things appear to have been men of such probity, as that they would not dare to say, they had the Spirit of God, when they had it not, or if they so much as doubted whether they had it or not; yea, they are careful, when they speak their own private opinion, or only under some common influence, to tell the world, that not the Lord, but they spoke those things, but that in the rest it was not they, but the Lord, 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, &c. And the apostle Paul makes the acknowledgment of this their inspiration, to be a test to try those that pretended to be prophets or spiritual: let them (says he) acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. And the apostle Peter gives this as the reason of his writing, that those he wrote to might after his decease have those things always in remembrance, 2 Pet. i. 15. which afterwards he calls the commandment of the apostles of the Lord, chap. iii. 1, 2. and so of the Lord himself. And the apostle John declareth, 1 Ep. iv. 6. We are of God, he that knoweth God beareth us, he that is not of God beareth not us; by this we know the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

As to the style of these epistles, though it be necessary we should believe a divine influence superintending the several writers of them, yet it is not easy to explain the manner of it, nor to determine whether and in what particulars the words they wrote were dictated to them by the holy Spirit, as mere amanuenses, or how far their own memories and reasoning faculties, and other natural or acquired endowments, were employed under the inspection of the Spirit. We must believe these holy men spoke and wrote as they were moved by the holy Ghost, that he put them on, and assisted them in this work. It is very probable sometimes, he not only suggested the very thoughts in their minds, but put words into their mouths, and always infallibly guided them into all truth, both when they expounded the scriptures of the Old Testament, and when they gave rules for our faith and practice in the gospel church-state.

AND yet, perhaps, it may be allowed, without any diminution to the authority of these epistles, that the penmen of them made some use of their own reasoning powers and different endowments in their manner of writing, as well as of their different sorts of chirography; and that by this we are to account for that difference of style, which has been observed between the writings of Paul who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and those of Peter and John who were fishermen. The like difference may be discerned between the style of the prophet Isaiah who was educated in a court, and that of Amos, who

was one of the herdsmen of Tekoah. However, the best way to understand these scriptures aright, is not to criticize too nicely upon the words and phrases, but to attend carefully to the drift and design of these inspired writers in them.

THE *subject-matter* of these epistles is intirely conformable to the rest of the scriptures: in them we find frequent reference to some passages of the Old Testament, and explanations of them; in the epistle to the Hebrews, we have the best exposition of the Levitical law. Indeed the New Testament refers to, and in a manner builds upon the Old, shewing the accomplishment of all the antient promises and prophecies concerning the Messiah, and explains all the antiquated types and *shadows of the good things that were then to come*. But besides these references to the preceding part of holy writ, in some of these epistles there are contained prophecies, either wholly new, or at least more largely and plainly revealed, as that in the *Revelation* concerning the rise, reign and fall of antichrist, of which great apostasy we have some account in 2 *Thess.* ii. 3, 4. and in 1 *Tim.* iv. 1, 2, 3. And in these epistles we have several of the great doctrines of the gospel more fully discussed than elsewhere; particularly the doctrine of original sin, of the sin that dwells in the regenerate, and of justification by the righteousness of Christ, of the abolishing the Jewish rites and ceremonies, of the true nature and design of the seals of the new covenant, the obligations they bring us under, and their perpetual use in the christian faith.

THE general method of these epistles is such as best serves the end and design of them, which is indeed the end of the whole scripture, practical godliness, out of a principle of divine love, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; accordingly most of the epistles begin with the great doctrines of the gospel, the articles of the christian faith, which when received work by love, purify the conscience, and produce evangelical obedience: and after these principles have been laid down, practical conclusions are drawn and urged from them. In taking this method, there is a regard had to the nature and faculties of the soul of man, where the understanding is to lead the way, the will, affections and executive powers to follow after; and to the nature of religion in general, which is a reasonable service; that we are not to be determined by superstitious fancies, nor by blind passions, but by a sound judgment and good understanding in the mind and will of God: by this we are taught how necessary it is that faith and practice, truth and holiness be joined together, that the performance of moral duties will never be acceptable to God, or available to our own salvation, without the belief of the truth; since those who make shipwreck of the faith seldom maintain a good conscience, and the most solemn profession of the faith will never save those that *hold the truth in unrighteousness*.

THE particular occasions upon which these epistles were written do not so evidently appear in them all as in some. The first to the Corinthians seems to have taken its rise from the unhappy divisions, that so early rose in the churches of Christ, through the emulation of the ministers, and personal affections of the people; but it does not confine it self to that subject. That to the Galatians seems directed chiefly against those Judaizing teachers that went about to draw the Gentile converts away from the simplicity of the gospel in doctrine and worship. The epistle to the Hebrews is manifestly calculated to wean the converted Jews from those Mosaical rites and ceremonies, they retained too great a fondness for, and to reconcile them to the abolition of that œconomy. Those epistles that are directed to particular persons more evidently carry their design in them, which he that runs may read.

BUT this is certain, none of these epistles are of private interpretation, most of the psalms and of the prophecies of the Old Testament were penned or pronounced on particular occasions, and yet they are of standing and universal use, and very instructive even to us upon whom the ends of the world are come. And so are those epistles, that seem to have been most limited in the rise and occasion of them. There will always be need enough to warn Christians against uncharitable divisions, against corrupting the faith and worship of the gospel: and wherever the case is the same, those epistles are as certainly directed to such churches and persons, as if they had been inscribed to them.

THESE general observations we suppose may be sufficient to introduce the reader into the book it self; let us now take a short view of the whole work, of which this posthumous piece is the conclusion: It is now about fourteen years since the first part of this exposition of the bible was made publick; in five years time the Old Testament was finished in four volumes. The first volume of the New Testament was longer in hand; for tho the ever-memorable author was always fully employed in the ordinary work of his ministry, yet those last years of his life in which he drew up this exposition upon the historical part of the New Testament, were less at his own command than any other had been; his removal to Hackney, his almost continual preaching from day to day, his journeys to Chester, and the necessity of more frequent visits to his friends in and about London, together with a gradual sensible decay of health, will more than excuse the three years time that passed before that was finished. And under such difficulties, none but a man of his holy zeal, and unwearied industry, and great sagacity, could have gone through such a service in that space of time. He lived not to see that volume published, tho' left by him ready for the press: The church of God was suddenly deprived of one of the most useful ministers of the age. We have now been gathering up the fragments of those feasts with which he used to entertain his family and friends, in his delightful work of opening the scriptures.

The P R E F A C E.

W H A T remains, is, that we recommend the whole of this Work to the acceptance and blessing of our God and Saviour, to whose honour and interest it was from the first directed and devoted. We need not be very sollicitous about the acceptance it may meet with in the world: what has been before published, has been received and read with great pleasure and advantage by the most serious experienced Christians in Great Britain and Ireland: the many loud calls there have been for the publishing this supplement, and reprinting the whole, leave us no room to doubt, but that it will meet with a hearty welcome. Tho it must be acknowledged we live in an age, that by feeding upon ashes, and the wind, has very much lost the relish of every thing that is spiritual and evangelical; yet we persuade ourselves there will still be found many, who, *by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

T H O S E that may think the expository notes too long, especially for family-worship, may easily relieve themselves, either by reading a lesser part of the chapter at one time, or by abridging the annotations, and perusing the rest when they have more leisure: for tho it must be owned they are somewhat copious, yet we are persuaded those that peruse them seriously, will find nothing in them superfluous or impertinent; and if any where some things in the comment do not seem to flow so naturally and necessarily from the text, we believe, when they are well considered and compared, it will appear they come under the analogy and general reason of the subject, and truly belong to it.

I F there be any that think this exposition of the bible is too plain and familiar, that it wants the beauties of oratory, and the strength of criticism; we only wish they will read it over again with due attention, and we are pretty confident, they will find the style natural, clear, and comprehensive: and we think they will hardly be able to produce one valuable criticism out of the most learned commentators, but they will have it in this exposition, tho' couched in plain terms, and not brought in as of a critical nature. No man was more happy than Mr. HENRY in that useful talent of making dark things plain, while too many, that value themselves upon their criticizing faculty, affect rather to make plain things dark.

B U T we leave this great and good work to speak for it self, and doubt not but it will grow in its use and esteem, and will thro' the blessing of God help to revive and promote family-religion and scriptural-knowledge, and support the credit of scripture-commentaries, tho' couched in human expressions. These have been always accounted the great treasures of the church, and when done with judgment, have been so far from lessening the authority of the bible, that they have greatly promoted its honour and usefulness.



A N E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. Paul to the ROMANS,

With Practical Observations.

If we may compare scripture with scripture, and take the opinion of some devout and pious persons; in the Old Testament, David's psalms, and in the New Testament, Paul's epistles, are stars of the first magnitude, that differ from the other stars in glory.

The whole Scripture is indeed an epistle from heaven to earth; but in it we have upon record several particular epistles, more of St. Paul's than of any other; for he was the chief of the apostles, and laboured more abundantly than they all. His natural parts, I doubt not, were very pregnant, his apprehension quick and piercing, his expression fluent and copious, his affections, wherever he took, very warm and zealous, and his resolutions no less bold and daring: this made him, before his conversion, a very keen and bitter persecutor; but when the strong man armed was dispossessed, and the stronger than he came to divide the spoils, and to satisfy these qualifications, he became the most skilful, zealous preacher; never any better fitted to win Souls, nor more successful.

Fourteen of his epistles we have in the canon of scripture; many more, 'tis probable, he wrote in the course of his ministry, which might be profitable enough for doctrine, for reproof, &c. but not being given by inspiration of God, they were not received as canonical scripture, nor handed down to us. Six epistles said to be Paul's, written to Seneca, and eight of Seneca's to him, are spoken of by some of the antients, [Sixt. Senens. Bibliot. Sanct. l. 2.] and are extant; but upon the first view they appear spurious and counterfeit.

This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and, perhaps, because of the dignity of the place to which it is written. Chrysostom would have this epistle read over to him twice a week.

It is gathered from some passages in the epistle, that it was written Anno Christi 56. from Corinth, while Paul made a short stay there in his way to Troas, Acts xx. 5, 6. He commendeth to the Romans Phebe, a servant of the church of Cenchrea, Rom. xvi. which was a place belonging to Corinth: He calls Gaius his host, or the man with whom he lodged, Rom. xvi. 23. and he was a Corinthian, not the same with Gaius of Derbe mention'd, Acts xx. Paul was now going up to Jerusalem with the money that was given to the poor Saints there; and of that he speaks, Rom. xv. 26.

The great mysteries treated of in this epistle, must needs produce in this, as in other writings of Paul, many things dark, and hard to be understood, 2 Pet. iii. 16.

The method of this (as of several other of the epistles) is observable; the former part of it doctrinal, in the eleven first chapters; the latter part practical, in the five last: to inform the judgment, and to reform the life. And the best way to understand the truths explained in the former part, is to abide and abound in the practice of the duties prescribed in the latter part; for if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, John vii. 17.

First, The doctrinal part of the epistle instructs us,

1. *Concerning the way of salvation: (1.) The foundation of it laid in justification, and that not by the Gentiles works of nature, chap. i. nor by the Jews works of the law, chap. ii, iii. for both Jews and Gentiles were liable to the curse: But only by faith in Jesus Christ, chap. iii. 21. &c. chap. iv. per tot. (2.) The steps of this salvation are, First, Peace with God, chap. v. Secondly, Sanctification, chap. vi, vii. Thirdly, Glorification, chap. viii.*

2. *Concerning the persons saved, such as belong to the election of grace, chap. ix. Gentiles and Jews, chap. x. xi. By this it appears, that the subjects he discourseth of, were such as were then the present truths, as the apostle speaks, 2 Pet. i. 12. Two things the Jews then stumbled at, justification by faith without the works of the law, and the admission of the Gentiles into the church; and therefore both these he studied to clear and vindicate.*

Secondly, The practical part follows: wherein we find, First, Several general exhortations proper for all Christians, chap. xii. Secondly, Directions for our behaviour, as members of a civil society, chap. xiii. Thirdly, Rules for the conduct of Christians to one another, as members of the Christian church, chap. xiv. & chap. xv. to ver. 14.

Thirdly, As he draws towards a conclusion, he makes an apology for writing to them, chap. xv. 14,---16. Gives them an account of himself and his own affairs, ver. 17,---21. Promises them a visit, ver. 22,---29. Begs their prayers, ver. 30,---33. Sends particular salutations to many friends there, chap. xvi. 1,---16. Warns them against those who caused divisions. ver. 17---20. Adds the salutations of his friends with him, ver. 21---23. And ends with a benediction to them, and a doxology to God, ver. 24,---27.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we may observe, 1. The preface or introduction to the whole epistle, to ver. 16. 2. A description of the deplorable condition of the Gentile world, which begins the proof of the doctrine of justification by faith, here laid down at ver. 17. The first is according to the then usual formality of a letter, but intermixed with very excellent and savoury expressions.

1. **P**AUL a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures) 3. Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4. And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 5. By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name: 6. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. 7. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this paragraph we have,

1. The person, who writes the epistle, described ver. 1. Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, that is his title of honour which he glories in, not as the Jewish teachers, Rabbi, Rabbi; but a servant, a more immediate attendant, a steward in the house.

Called to be an apostle. Some think he alludes to his old name Saul, which signifies one called for, or enquired after: Christ sought him to make an apostle of him, Acts ix. 15. He here builds his authority upon his call; he did not run without sending, as the false apostles did: κλητός ἀπόστολος, called an apostle; as if this were the name he would be called by, though he acknowledgeth himself not meet to be called so, 1 Cor. xv. 9.

Separated to the gospel of God. The Pharisees had their name from separation, because they separated themselves to the study of the law, and might be called ἀφωρισμένοι εἰς τὸν νόμον: such a one Paul had been, when time was; but now he had changed his studies, was ἀφωρισμένος εἰς τὸ Ἐυαγγέλιον, a gospel-Pharisee, separated by the counsel of God, Gal. i. 15. separated from his mother's womb, by an immediate direction of the Spirit, and a regular ordination, according to that direction, Acts xiii. 2, 3. by a dedication of himself to this work. He was an entire devotee to the gospel of God, the gospel which hath God for its author, the original and extraction of it divine and heavenly.

2. Having mentioned the gospel of God, he digresseth to give us an encomium of it.

1. The antiquity of it; it was promised before, ver. 2. it was no novel upstart doctrine, but of ancient standing in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, which did all unanimously point at the gospel; the morning-beams that ushered in the sun of righteousness. This not by word of mouth only, but in the scriptures.

2. The subject-matter of it; it is concerning Christ, ver. 3, 4. prophets, and apostles, all bear witness to him; he is the true treasure hid in the field of the scriptures. Observe, when Paul mentions Christ, how he heaps up his names and titles, his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, as one that took a pleasure in speaking of him; and having mentioned him, he cannot go on in his discourse without some expression of love and honour, as here, where, in one person, he shews us his two distinct natures.

1. His human nature; made of the seed of David, ver. 3. i. e. born of the virgin Mary, who was of the house of David; Luke i. 27. as was Joseph, his supposed father, Luke ii. 4. David is here mentioned, because of the special promises made to him concerning the Messiah, especially his kingly office; 2 Sam. vii. 12. Psal. cxxxii. 11. compared with Luke i. 32, 33.

2. His divine nature; declared to be the Son of God, ver. 4. the Son of God by eternal generation, or as it is here explained according to the Spirit of holiness: According to the flesh, i. e. his human nature, he was of the seed of David; but according to the Spirit of holiness, i. e. the divine nature (as he is said to be quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 18. compared with 2 Cor. xiii. 4.) so he is the Son of God.

And the great proof or demonstration of this, is his resurrection from the dead, that proved it effectually and undeniably. The sign of the prophet Jonas, i. e. Christ's resurrection, was intended for the last conviction, Mat. xii. 39, 40. Those that would not be convinced by that, would be convinced by nothing.

So that we have here a summary of the gospel-doctrine concerning Christ's two natures in one person.

3. The fruit of it, ver. 5. By whom, i. e. by Christ manifested and made known in the gospel, we, Paul and the rest of the ministers, have received grace and apostleship, i. e. the favour to be made apostles, Eph. iii. 8. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world, led a life of toil, and trouble, and hazard, were killed all the day long; and yet Paul reckons the apostleship a favour: we may justly reckon it a great favour to be employed in any work or service for God, whatever difficulties or dangers we may meet with in it.

This apostleship was received for obedience to the faith, i. e. to bring people to that obedience; as Christ, to his ministers received that they might give: Paul's was for this obedience among all nations, for he was the apostle of the Gentiles, chap. xi. 13. Observe the description here given of the Christian profession, it is obedience to the faith; it doth not consist in a notional knowledge, or a naked assent, much less doth it consist in perverse disputings, but in obedience: This obedience to the faith answers the law of faith, mentioned chap. iii. 27. The act of faith is the obedience of the understanding to God revealing, and the product of that is the obedience of the will to God commanding. To anticipate the ill use which might be made of the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, which he was to explain in the following epistle, he here speaks of Christianity as an obedience: Christ has a yoke.

Ver. 6. Among whom are ye: you Romans in this stand upon the same level with other Gentile nations of less fame and wealth; you are all one in Christ. The gospel-salvation is a common salvation; Jude 3. No respect of persons with God.

The called of Jesus Christ; all those, and those only, are brought to an obedience of the faith, that are effectually called of Jesus Christ.

3. The persons to whom it is written, ver. 7. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, i. e. to all the professing Christians that were in Rome, whether Jews or Gentiles originally, whether high or low, bond or free, learned or unlearned; rich and poor meet together in Christ Jesus.

Here is, 1. The privilege of Christians; they are beloved of God, they are members of that body which is beloved, which is God's Hephzi-bah, in which his delight is: We speak of God's love by his bounty and beneficence, and so he hath a common love to all mankind, and a peculiar love for true believers; and between these there is a love he hath for all the body of visible Christians.

2. The duty of Christians; and that is to be holy, for hereunto are they called, called to be saints, called to salvation through sanctification. Saints, and only saints, are beloved of God with a special and peculiar love.

Κλητοὶ ἁγίοις, called saints, saints in profession; it were well if all that are called saints were saints indeed: they that are called saints, should labour to answer the name; otherwise, though it is an honour and a privilege, yet it will be of little avail at the great day to have been called saints, if we be not really so.

4. The apostolical benediction, ver. 7. Grace to you and peace: This is one of the tokens in every epistle; and it hath not only the affection of a good wish, but the authority of a blessing: the priests under the law were to bless the people, and so gospel-ministers, in the name of the Lord.

In this usual benediction observe,

1. The favours desired, grace and peace; the Old Testament salutation was peace be to you; but now grace is prefixed, grace, i. e. the favour of God towards us, or the work of God in us, both are previously requisite to true peace: All gospel blessings are included in these two, grace and peace.

Peace, i. e. all good, peace with God, peace in your own consciences, peace with all that are about you; all these founded in grace.

2. The fountain of those favours, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: All good comes, 1. From God as a father; he hath put himself into that relation, to engage and encourage our desires and expectation: we are taught, when we come for grace and peace, to call him our father. 2. From the Lord Jesus Christ, as mediator, and the great feeoffee in trust, for the conveying and securing of these benefits: We have them from his fulness; peace from the fulness of his merit, grace from the fulness of his Spirit.

8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10. Making request (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you. 11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; 12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed

fed to come unto you (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. 14. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

We may here observe,

1. His thanksgiving for them, *ver. 8. First, I thank my God.* It is good to begin every thing with blessing God, to make that the *alpha and omega* of every song, in every thing to give thanks.

My God. He speaks this with delight and triumph. In all our thanksgivings, it is good for us to eye God as our God; that makes every mercy sweet, when we can say of God, he is mine in covenant.

Through Jesus Christ. All our duties and performances are pleasing to God, only through Jesus Christ; praises, as well as prayers.

For you all. We must express our love to our friends, not only by praying for them, but by praising God for them; God must have the glory of all the comfort we have in our friends; for every creature is that to us, and no more than God makes it to be. Many of these Romans Paul had no personal acquaintance with, and yet he could heartily rejoice in their gifts and graces. When some of the Roman Christians met him, *Acts xxviii. 15.* he thanked God for them, and took courage; but here his true catholic love extends itself further, and he thanks God for them all; not only for those among them that were his helpers in Christ, and that bestowed much labour upon him, whom he speaks of *chap. xvi. 3, 6.* but for them all.

That your faith is spoken of. Paul travelled up and down from place to place, and, wherever he came, he heard great commendations of the Christians at Rome, which he mentions, not to make them proud, but to quicken them to answer the general character people gave of them, and the general expectation people had from them. The greater reputation a man hath for religion, the more careful he should be to preserve it, because *a little folly spoils him that is in reputation,* Eccl. x. 1.

Throughout the whole world, i. e. the Roman empire, into which the Roman Christians, upon Claudius's edict to banish all the Jews from Rome, were scattered abroad, but were now returned, and, it seems, left a very good report behind them, wherever they had been, in all the churches; there was this good effect of their sufferings; if they had not been persecuted, they had not been famous; this was indeed a good name, a name for good things, with God and good people: As the elders of old, so these Romans, obtained a good report through faith, Heb. xi. 2. It is a desirable thing to be famous for faith.

The faith of the Roman Christians came to be thus talked of, not only because it was excelling in itself, but because it was eminent and observable in its circumstances. Rome was a city upon a hill, every one took notice what was done there. Thus, they who have many eyes upon them, have need to walk circumspectly, for what they do, good or bad, will be spoken of.

The church of Rome was then a flourishing church; but since that time how is the gold become tin? how is the most fine gold changed? Rome is not what it was: She was then espoused a chaste virgin to Christ, and excelled in beauty; but she has since degenerated, dealt treacherously, and embraced the bosom of a stranger; so that (as that good old book, *the Practice of piety*, makes appear in no less than twenty six instances) even *the epistle to the Romans*, is now an epistle against the Romans; little reason has she therefore to brag of her former credit.

2. His prayer for them, *ver. 9.* Though a famous flourishing church, yet they had need to be prayed for: *Had not yet attained.* Paul mentions this as an instance of his love to them. One of the greatest kindnesses we can do our friends, and sometimes the only kindness that is in the power of our hands, is by prayer to recommend them to the loving kindness of God. From Paul's example here we may learn,

(1.) Constancy in prayer; *always, without ceasing.* He did himself observe the same rules he gave to others, *Eph. vi. 18. 1 Thess. v. 17.* not that Paul did nothing else but pray, but he kept up stated times for the solemn performance of that duty, and those very frequent, and observed without fail.

(2.) Charity in prayer; *I make mention of you.* Though he had no particular acquaintance with them, or interest in them, yet he prayed for them; not only for all saints in general, but he made express mention of them. It is not unfit sometimes to be express in our prayers for particular churches and places; not to inform God, but to affect ourselves. We are likely to have most comfort in those friends that we pray most for. Concerning this he makes a solemn appeal to the searcher of hearts, for *God is my witness.* It was in a weighty matter, and in a thing known only to God, and his own heart, that he used this asseveration. It is very comfortable to be able to call God to witness to our sincerity and constancy in the discharge of a duty. God is particularly a witness to our secret prayers, the matter of them, the manner of the performance; then *our Father sees in secret,* Matt. vi. 6.

God, whom I serve with my spirit. Those that serve God with their spirits, may, with a humble confidence, appeal to him; hypocrites cannot, that rest in bodily exercise.

His particular prayer, among many other petitions he put up for them, was, that he might have an opportunity of giving them a visit, *ver. 10. Making request, if by any means, &c.* Whatever comfort we desire to find in any creature, we must have recourse to God for it by prayer; for *our times are in his hand, and all our ways at his dispose.* The expressions here used intimate, that he was very desirous of such an opportunity, *if by any means*; that he had long and often been disappointed, *now at length*; and yet that he submitted it to the divine providence, *a prosperous journey by the will of God.* As in our purposes, so in our desires, we must still remember to insert this, *if the Lord will,* Jam. iv. 15. Our journeys are prosperous, or otherwise, according to the will of God; comfortable, or not, as he pleases.

3. His great desire to see them, with the reasons of it, *ver. 11, 15.* he had heard so much of them, that he had a great mind to be better acquainted with them. Fruitful Christians are as much the joy, as barren professors are the grief of faithful ministers.

Accordingly he often purposed to come, but was let hitherto, *ver. 13.* for man purposeth, but God disposeth: He was hindered by other business that took him off, by his care of other churches, whose affairs were pressing; and Paul was for doing that first, not which was most pleasant (then he would have gone to Rome) but which was most needful. A good example to ministers, who must not consult their own inclinations so much as the necessity of their peoples souls.

Paul desired to visit these Romans,

1. That they might be edified, *ver. 11. That I may impart unto you:* He received, that he might communicate. Never were Iull breasts so desirous to be drawn out as the sucking infant, as Paul's head and heart were to be imparting spiritual gifts, i. e. preaching to them: A good sermon is a good gift, so much the better for being a spiritual gift.

To the end you may be established. Having commended their flourishing, he here expresseth his desire of their establishment, that as they grew upwards in the branches, they might grow downwards in the root. The best saints, while they are in such a shaking world as this, have need to be more and more established; and spiritual gifts are of special use for our establishment.

2. That he might be comforted, *ver. 12.* What he heard of their flourishing in grace, was so much a joy to him, that it must needs be much more so to behold it. Paul could take comfort in the fruit of the labours of other ministers.

By the mutual faith both of you and me, i. e. our mutual faithfulness and fidelity. It is very comfortable when there is a mutual confidence between minister and people, they confiding in him as a faithful minister, and he in them as a faithful people: Or the mutual work of faith, which is love; they rejoiced in the expressions of one another's love, or communicating their faith one to another. It is very refreshing to Christians to compare notes about their spiritual concerns; thus are they sharpened, *as iron sharpens iron.*

Ver. 13. That I might have some fruit. Their edification would be his advantage, it would be fruit abounding to a good account. Paul minded his work as one that believed the more good he did the greater would his reward be.

3. That he might discharge his trust as the apostle of the Gentiles, *ver. 14. I am a debtor.* 1. His receivings made him debtor; the great gifts and abilities which he had, made him a debtor; for they were talents he was intrusted with to trade for his Master's honour. We should think of this when we covet great things, that all our receivings put us in debt; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods. 2. His office made him a debtor; he was a debtor as he was an apostle, he was called and sent to work, and had engaged to mind it.

Paul had improved his talent, and laboured in his work, and done as much good as ever any man did, and yet, in reflexion upon it, he still writes himself debtor; for *when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants.*

Debtor to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, i. e. as the following words explain it, *to the wise, and to the unwise.* The Greeks fancied themselves to have the monopoly of wisdom, and looked upon all the rest of the world as barbarians, comparatively so; not cultivated with learning and arts, as they were. Now Paul was a debtor to both, looked upon himself as obliged to do all the good he could both to the one and to the other. Accordingly we find him paying his debt, both in his preaching and in his writing, doing good both to Greeks and barbarians, and suiting his discourse to the capacity of each. You may observe a difference between his sermon at Lystra among the plain Lycaonians, *Acts xiv. 15, &c.* and his sermon at Athens among the polite philosophers, *Acts xvii. 22, &c.* both he performed as debtor to each, giving to each their portion. Though a plain preacher, yet, as debtor to the wise, he speaks wisdom among them that are perfect, *1 Cor. ii. 6.*

For these reasons he was ready, if he had an opportunity, to preach the gospel at Rome, *ver. 15.* Though a publick place, though

though a perilous place, where Christianity met with a great deal of opposition, yet Paul was ready to run the risk at Rome, if called to it; *I am ready, ἑτοιμὸν*. It notes a great readiness of mind, and that he was very forward to it: What he did was not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. It is an excellent thing to be ready to meet every opportunity of doing or getting good.

16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, *The just shall live by faith*. 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Paul here enters upon a large discourse of justification; in the latter part of this chapter laying down his thesis; and, in order to the proof of it, describing the deplorable condition of the Gentile world.

His transition is very handsome, and like an orator: he was ready to preach the gospel at Rome, though a place where the gospel was run down by those that called themselves the wits; for, *faith h, I am not ashamed of it*, ver. 16.

There is a great deal in the gospel, which such a man as Paul might be tempted to be ashamed of, especially that he, whose gospel it is, was a man hanged upon a tree, that the doctrine of it was plain, had little in it to set it off among scholars, the professors of it were mean and despised, and every where spoken against, yet Paul was not ashamed to own it. I reckon him a Christian indeed, that is neither ashamed of the gospel, nor a shame to it.

The reason of this bold profession, taken from the nature and excellency of the gospel, introduceth his dissertation.

First, The proposition, ver. 16, 17. The excellency of the gospel lies in this, that it reveals to us,

1. The salvation of believers at the end; *it is the power of God unto salvation*: Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, how mean and contemptible soever it appear to a carnal eye; for the power of God works by it the salvation of all that believe; it shews us the way of salvation, Acts xvi. 17. and is the great charter, by which salvation is conveyed, and made over to us: But,

(1.) *It is through the power of God*, without that power the gospel is but a dead letter; *the revelation of the gospel is the revelation of the arm of the Lord*, Isa. liii. 1. as power went along with the word of Christ to heal diseases.

(2.) It is to those, and those only, *that believe*; believing interests us in the gospel salvation; to others it is hidden: The medicine prepared will not cure the patient if it be not taken.

To the Jew first. The lost sheep of the house of Israel had the first offer made them, both by Christ and his apostles: *You first*, Acts iii. 26. but, upon their refusal, *the apostles turned to the Gentiles*, Acts xiii. 46. Jews and Gentiles now stand upon the same level, both equally miserable without a Saviour, and both equally welcome to the Saviour, Col. iii. 4. Such doctrine as this was surprizing to the Jews, who had hitherto been the peculiar people, and had looked with scorn upon the Gentile world; but the long expected Messiah proves a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel.

2. The justification of believers as the way, ver. 17. *For therein*, i. e. in this gospel, which Paul doth so much triumph in, *is the righteousness of God revealed*. Our misery and ruin being the product and consequent of our iniquity, that which will shew us the way of salvation, must needs shew us the way of justification; and that the gospel doth.

The gospel makes known a righteousness. While God is a just and holy God, and we are guilty sinners, it is necessary we have a righteousness wherein to appear before him; and, blessed be God, there is such a righteousness brought in by Messiah the prince, Dan. ix. 24. and revealed in the gospel; a righteousness, i. e. a gracious method of reconciliation and acceptance, notwithstanding the guilt of our sins.

This evangelical righteousness, (1.) Is called the righteousness of God; it is of God's appointing, of God's approving and accepting: It is so called, to cut off all pretensions to a righteousness resulting from the merit of our own works: It is the righteousness of Christ, who is God, resulting from a satisfaction of infinite value. (2.) It is said to be from faith to faith; from the faithfulness of God revealing, to the faith of man receiving, so some.

From the faith of dependence upon God, and dealing with him immediately, as Adam before the fall, to the faith of dependence upon a Mediator, and so dealing with God, so others.

From the first faith, by which we are put into a justified state, to after faith, by which we live, and are continued in that state: And the faith that justifies us, is no less than our taking Christ for our Saviour, and becoming true Christians, according to the tenor of the baptismal covenant: From faith engrafting us into Christ,

to faith deriving virtue from him as our root: Both implied in the next words, *The just shall live by faith*. Just by faith; there is faith justifying us; live by faith; there is faith maintaining us; and so there is a righteousness from faith to faith: Faith is all in all, both in the beginning and progress of a Christian life: It is not from faith to works, as if faith put us into a justified state, and then works preserved and maintained us in it; but it is all along from faith to faith, as 2 Cor. iii. 18. *From glory to glory*; it is increasing, continuing, persevering faith; faith pressing forward, and getting ground of unbelief.

To shew that this is no novel, upstart doctrine, he quotes for it that famous scripture in the Old Testament, so often mentioned in the New, Hab. ii. 4. *The just shall live by faith*. Being justified by faith, he shall live by it, both the life of grace, and of glory. The prophet there had placed himself upon the watch-tower, expecting some extraordinary discoveries, ver. 1. and the discovery was of the certainty of the appearance of the promised Messiah in the fulness of time, notwithstanding seeming delays; this is there called the vision, by way of eminence, as elsewhere the promise; and while that time is coming, as well as when it is come, *the just shall live by faith*. Thus is the evangelical righteousness from faith to faith; from Old Testament faith in a Christ to come, to New Testament faith in a Christ already come.

Secondly, The proof of this proposition, that both Jews and Gentiles stand in need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God, and that neither the one nor the other have any of their own to plead. Justification must be either by faith, or works; it cannot be by works, which he proves at large by describing the works both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore he concludes it must be by faith, chap. iii. 20, 28. The apostle, like a skillful surgeon, before he applies the plaster, searcheth the wound; endeavours first to convince of guilt and wrath, and then to shew the way of salvation. This makes the gospel the more welcome. We must first see the righteousness of God condemning, and then the righteousness of God justifying will appear worthy of all acceptance.

In general, ver. 18. *The wrath of God is revealed*. The light of nature, and the light of the law, reveal the wrath of God from sin to sin: It is well for us that the gospel reveals the justifying righteousness of God from faith to faith. The antithesis is observable.

1. Here is the sinfulness of man described; he reduceth it to two heads, *ungodliness, and unrighteousness*; *ungodliness* against the laws of the first table, *unrighteousness* against those of the second.

2. The cause of that sinfulness, and that is *holding the truth in unrighteousness*. Some communes notitiæ, some ideas they had of the being of God, and of the difference of good and evil; but they held them in unrighteousness, i. e. they knew and professed them in a consistency with their wicked courses; they held the truth, as a captive or prisoner, that it should not influence them, as otherwise it would. An unrighteous, wicked heart is the dungeon, in which many a good truth is detained, and buried: *Holding fast the form of sound words in faith and love*, is the root of all religion, 2 Tim. i. 13. but *holding it fast in unrighteousness*, is the root of all sin.

3. The displeasure of God against it; *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*; not only in the written word, which is given by inspiration of God, the Gentiles had not that, but in the providences of God, his judgments executed upon sinners, which do not spring out of the dust, or fall out by chance, nor are they to be ascribed to second causes, but they are a revelation from heaven: Or, *wrath from heaven is revealed*; it is not the wrath of a man like ourselves, but wrath from heaven, therefore the more terrible, and the more unavoidable.

19. Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21. Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools: 23. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25. Who changed the truth of God into a lye, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26. For this cause God

God gave them up unto vile affections : for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature ; 27. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient : 29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, 30. Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful ; proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31. Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful : 32. Who knowing the judgment of God, (that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

In this last part of the chapter he applies what he had said particularly to the Gentile world : In which we may observe,

First, The means and helps they had to come to the knowledge of God. Though they had not such a knowledge of his law, as Jacob and Israel had, *Psal. cxlvii. ult.* yet among them, *he left not himself without witness, Acts xiv. 17. ver. 19, 20. For that which may, &c.* Observe,

1. What discoveries they had : *That which may be known of God is manifest, in divinis, among them ;* i. e. there were some even among them that had the knowledge of God, were convinced of the existence of one supreme *numen*. The philosophy of *Pythagoras, Plato*, and the *Stoicks*, discovered a great deal of the knowledge of God, as appears by plenty of testimonies.

That which may be known ; which implies, there is a great deal which may not be known. The being of God may be apprehended, but cannot be comprehended. We cannot by searching find him out, *Job xi. 7, 8, 9.* Finite understandings cannot perfectly know an infinite being ; but blessed be God there is that which may be known, enough to lead us to our chief end, the glorifying and enjoying of him : and these things revealed belong to us and to our children, while secret things are not to be pried into, *Deut. xxix 29.*

2. Whence they had these discoveries : *God hath shewed it to them.* Those common natural notions they had of God were imprinted upon their hearts by the God of nature himself, who is the *father of lights.*

This sense of a deity, and a regard to that deity, is so connate with the human nature, that some think we are to distinguish men from brutes by these rather than by reason.

4. By what way and means these discoveries and notices they had were confirmed and improved, *viz.* by the work of creation, *ver. 20. For the, &c.*

1. Observe what they knew : the *invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead.* Though God be not the object of sense, yet he hath discovered and made known himself by those things that are sensible. The power and Godhead of God are *invisible* things, and yet are *clearly seen* in their products. He works in secret, *Job xxiii. 8, 9. Psal. cxxxix. 15. Eccl. xi. 5.* but manifests what he has wrought, and therein makes known his *power and Godhead*, and other his attributes, which natural light apprehends in the idea of a God. They could not come by natural light to the knowledge of the three persons in the Godhead, (though some fancy they have found footsteps of that in *Plato's* writings) but they did come to the knowledge of the Godhead, at least so much knowledge as was sufficient to have kept them from idolatry. This was that truth which they held in unrighteousness.

2. How they knew it : *By the things that are made ;* which could not make themselves, nor fall into such an exact order and harmony by any casual hits ; and therefore must have been produced by some first cause, or intelligent agent ; which first cause could be no other than an eternal powerful God. See *Psal. xix. 1. Isa. xl. 26. Acts xvii. 24.* The workman is known by his work. The variety, multitude, order, beauty, harmony, different nature, and excellent contrivance of the *things that are made*, the direction of them to certain ends, and the concurrence of all the parts to the good and beauty of the whole, do abundantly prove a creator, and his eternal power and Godhead. Thus did the light shine in the darkness.

And this *from the creation of the world* : Understand it either, 1. As the topick, from which the knowledge of them is drawn. To evince this truth, we have recourse to the great work of creation. And some think this *κτίσις κόσμου*, this *creature of the world*, as it may be read, is to be understood of man, the *κτίσις*

καὶ ἔχοντι, the most remarkable creature of the lower world, called *κτίσις*, *Mark xvi. 15.*

The frame and structure of human bodies, and especially the most excellent powers, faculties, and capacities of human souls, do abundantly prove, that there is a Creator, and that he is God.

Or, 2. As the date of the discovery. It is as old as the creation of the world. In this sense *ἀπο κτίσεως κόσμου*, is most frequently used in scripture. These notices concerning God are not any modern discoveries, hit upon of late, but antient truths, which were from the beginning. The way of the acknowledgment of God is a good old way ; it was from the beginning. Truth got the start of error.

Secondly, Their gross idolatry, notwithstanding these discoveries that God made to them of himself ; described here, *ver. 21, 22, 23, 25.* And we shall the less wonder at the inefficacy of these natural discoveries to prevent the idolatry of the Gentiles, if we remember how prone, even the Jews, who had scripture light to guide them, were to idolatry ; so miserably are the degenerate sons of men plunged in the mire of sense. Observe,

1. The inward cause of their idolatry, *ver. 21, 22.* They are therefore without excuse, in that they did know God, and from what they knew might easily infer, that it was their duty to worship him, and him only. Though some have greater light and means of knowledge than others, yet all have enough to leave them inexcusable.

But the mischief of it was, that they *glorified him not as God ;* their affections towards him, and their awe and adoration of him, did not keep pace with their knowledge. To glorify him as God, is to glorify him only ; for there can be but one infinite : but they did not so glorify him, for they set up a multitude of other deities. To glorify him as God, is to worship him with spiritual worship ; but they made images of him. Not to glorify God *as God*, is in effect not to glorify him at all : to respect him as a creature, is not to glorify him, but to dishonour him.

Neither were thankful ; not thankful for the favours in general they received from God. Insensibleness of God's mercies is at the bottom of our sinful departures from him. Not thankful in particular for the discoveries God was pleased to make of himself to them. Those that do not improve the means of knowledge and grace, are justly reckoned unthankful for them.

But became vain in their imaginations, ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς, in their reasonings, in their practical inferences. They had a great deal of knowledge of general truths, *ver. 19.* but no prudence to apply them to particular cases. Or, in their notions of God, and the creation of the world, and the origination of mankind, and the chief good ; in these things, when they quitted the plain truth, they soon disputed themselves into a thousand vain and foolish fancies. The several opinions and hypotheses of the various sects of philosophers concerning these things, were so many *vain imaginations*. When truth is forsaken, errors multiply in *infinitum*.

And their foolish heart was darkened. The foolishness and practical wickedness of the heart clouds and darkens the intellectual powers and faculties. Nothing tends more to the blinding and perverting of the understanding, than the corruption and depravedness of the will and affections.

Ver. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. This looks black upon the philosophers, the pretenders to wisdom, and professors of it. Those that had the most luxuriant fancy in framing to themselves the idea of a God, fell into the most gross and absurd conceits : and it was the just punishment of their pride and self-conceitedness.

It hath been observed, that the most refined nations, that made the greatest shew of wisdom, were the errantest fools in religion. The barbarians adored sun and moon, which of all others was the most specious idolatry ; while the learned Egyptians worshipped an ox and a onion. The Grecians, that excelled them in wisdom, adored diseases and human passions : the Romans, the wisest of all, worshipped the furies : And, at this day, the poor Americans worship the thunder ; while the ingenious Chinese adore the devil. Thus the *world by wisdom knew not God*, *1 Cor. i. 21.* As a profession of wisdom is an aggravation of folly, so a proud conceit of wisdom is the cause of a great deal of folly. Hence we read of few philosophers that were converted to Christianity ; and Paul's preaching was no where so laughed at and ridiculed, as among the learned Athenians, *Acts xvii. 18, 32.*

φάσκοντες εἶναι, conceiving themselves to be wise. The plain truth of the being of God would not content them ; they thought themselves above that, and so fell into the greatest errors.

2. The outward acts of their idolatry, *ver. 23, 25.*

1. Making images of God, *ver. 23.* by which, as much as in them lay, they *changed the glory of the incorruptible God.* Compare *Psal. cvi. 20. Jer. ii. 11.* They ascribed a deity to the most contemptible creatures, and by them represented God. It was the greatest honour God did to man, that he made man in the image of God ; but it is the greatest dishonour man hath done to God, that he has made God in the image of man. This was it that God so strictly warned the Jews against, *Deut. iv. 15, &c.* This

the apostle shews the folly of in his sermon at Athens, *Act. xvii. 29.* See *Isa. xl. 18, &c. xlv. 10, &c.* This is called, *ver. 25. changing the truth of God into a lie.* As it did dishonour his glory, so it did misrepresent his being. Idols are called lyes, for they belye God, as if he had a body, whereas he is a spirit, *Jer. xxiii. 14. Hos. vii. 1. Teachers of lyes, Hab. ii. 18.*

2. Giving divine honour to the creature; *worshipped and served the creature, παρὰ τὴν κτίσιν*, besides the Creator. They did own a supreme *numen* in their profession, but they did in effect disown him by the worship they paid the creature: for God will be all or none. Or, above the Creator; paying more devotionary respect to their inferior deities, stars, hero's, demons, thinking the supreme God inaccessible, or above their worship. The sin itself was their worshipping of the creature at all; but this is mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, that they worshipped the creature more than the Creator. This was the general wickedness of the Gentile world, and became twisted in with their laws and government; in compliance with which, even the wise men among them, that knew and owned a supreme God, and were convinced of the nonsense and absurdity of their polytheism and idolatry, yet did as the rest of their neighbours did. *Seneca*, in his book *de superstitione*, as it is quoted by *Aug. de Civ. Dei*, lib. 6. cap. 10. (for the book itself is lost) after he had largely shewed the great folly and impiety of the vulgar religion, in divers instances of it, yet concludes, *quæ omnia sapiens servabit tanquam legibus iussa, non tanquam diis grata.* "All which a wise man will observe as established by law, not imagining them grateful to the gods." And afterwards, *omnem istam ignobilem deorum turbam, quam longo ævo longa superstitio congeffit, sic adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum ejus magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinere.* "All this ignoble rout of gods, which antient superstition has amassed together by long prescription, we will so adore, as to remember that the worship of them is rather a compliance with custom, than material in itself." Upon which *Austin* observes, *Colebat quod reprehendebat, agebat quod arguebat, quod culpabat adorabat.* "He worshipped that which he censured, he did that which he had proved wrong, and he adored what he found fault with." I mention this thus largely, because methinks it doth fully explain that of the apostle here, *ver. 18.* which *hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

It is observable, that upon the mention of the dishonour done to God by the idolatry of the Gentiles, the apostle in the midst of his discourse, expresseth himself in an awful adoration of God, *who is blessed for ever. Amen.* When we see or hear of any contempt cast upon God or his name, we should from thence take occasion to think and speak highly and honourably of him. In this, as in other things, the worse others are, the better we should be. *Blessed for ever*, notwithstanding these dishonours done to his name: though there are those that do not glorify him, yet he is and will be glorified to eternity.

3. The judgments of God upon them for this idolatry. Not many temporal judgments, (the idolatrous nations were the conquering, ruling nations of the world) but spiritual judgments, giving them up to the most brutish and unnatural lusts. *Παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς*; it is thrice repeated here, *ver. 24, 26, 28.* Spiritual judgments are of all other the sorest judgments, and to be most dreaded. Observe,

1. By whom they were given up. God gave them up, in a way of righteous judgment, as the just punishment of their idolatry; taking off the bridle of restraining grace; leaving them to themselves; letting them alone: for his grace is his own, he is debtor to no man, he may give or withhold his grace at pleasure. Whether this giving up be a positive act of God, or only privative, we leave to the schools to dispute: but this we are sure of, that it is no new thing for God to give men up to their own hearts lusts, to send them strong delusions, to let Satan loose upon them, nay, to lay stumbling-blocks before them. And yet God is not the author of sin, but herein infinitely just and holy; for though the greatest wickednesses follow upon this giving up, the fault of that is to be laid upon the sinner's wicked heart. If the patient be obstinate, and will not submit to the methods prescribed, but wilfully takes and doth that which is prejudicial to him; the physician is not to be blamed, if he give him up as in a desperate condition; and all the fatal symptoms that follow, are not to be imputed to the physician, but to the disease itself, and to the folly and wilfulness of the patient.

2. To what they were given up.

1. To *uncleanness and vile affections*, *ver. 24, 26, 27.* They that would not entertain the more pure and refined notions of natural light, which tend to preserve the honour of God, justly forfeited those more gross and palpable sentiments, which preserve the honour of human nature. *Man being in honour*, and refusing to understand the God that made him, thus becomes worse than the beasts that perish, *Psal. xlix. ult.* Thus one, by the divine permission, becomes the punishment of another; but it is (as it is said here) *through the lusts of their own hearts*, there all the fault is to be laid. Those who dishonoured God, were given up to dishonour themselves. A man cannot be delivered up to a greater slavery, than to be given up to his own lusts. Such are given over,

like the Egyptians, *Isa. xix. 4.* into the hand of a cruel Lord.

The particular instances of this uncleanness and vile affections are their unnatural lusts; which many of the heathen, even of those among them who passed for wise men, as Solon and Zeno, were infamous for, against the plainest and most obvious dictates of natural light. The crying iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, for which God rained hell from heaven upon them, became not only commonly practised, but avowed in the pagan nations. Perhaps, the apostle especially refers to the abominations that were committed in the worship of their idol gods, in which the worst of uncleannesses were prescribed, for the honour of their gods: dung-hill service for dunghill gods, the unclean spirits delight in such ministrations.

In the church of Rome, where the pagan idolatries are revived, images worshipped, and saints only substituted in the room of demons, we hear of these same abominations going barefaced, licensed by the pope, *Fox's Act. and Mon.* vol. i. pag. 808. and not only commonly perpetrated, but justified and pleaded for by some of their cardinals: the same spiritual plagues for the same spiritual wickednesses.

See what wickedness there is in the nature of man, how abominable and filthy is man! *Lord, what is man!* says David; what a vile creature is he, when left to himself? How much are we beholden to the restraining grace of God, for the preserving any thing of the honour and decency of the human nature? for, were it not for that, man that was made but little lower than the angels, would make himself a great deal lower than the devils. This is said to be that *recompence of their error which was meet.* The Judge of all the earth doth right, and observes a meetness between the sin and the punishment of it.

2. To a reprobate mind in these abominations, *ver. 28.*

They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. The blindness of their understandings was caused by the wilful aversion of their wills and affections. They did not retain God in their knowledge, because they did not like it. They would neither know nor do any thing but just what pleased themselves. It is just the temper of carnal hearts; the pleasing of themselves is their highest end.

There are many that have God in their knowledge, they cannot help it, the light shines so fully in their faces; but they do not retain him there; they say to the Almighty, *depart*, *Job xxi. 14.* and they therefore do not retain God in their knowledge, because it thwarts and contradicts their lusts, they do not like it.

In their knowledge, *ἐν ἐπιγνώσει*. There is a difference between *γνώσις* and *ἐπίγνωσις*, the knowledge and the acknowledgment of God; the pagans knew God, but did not, would not acknowledge him.

Answerable to which wilfulness of theirs, in gainsaying the truth, God gave them over to a wilfulness in the grossest sins, here called a *reprobate mind*, *εἰς ἀδόκιμον νῦν*, a mind void of all sense and judgment to discern things that differ, so that they could not distinguish their right hand from their left, in spiritual things. See whither a course of sin leads, and into what a gulph it plungeth the sinner at last; hither fleshly lusts have a direct tendency: *Eyes full of adultery cannot cease from sin*, *2 Pet. ii. 14.* This reprobate mind was a blind, seared conscience, past feeling, *Eph. iv. 19.* When the judgment is once reconciled to sin, the man is in the suburbs of hell. At first Pharaoh hardened his heart, but afterwards God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Thus wilful hardness is justly punished with judicial hardness.

To do those things which are not convenient. This Phrase may seem to bespeak a diminutive evil, but here it is expressive of the grossest enormities; things that are not agreeable to men, but contradict the very light and law of nature.

And here he subjoins a black list of those unbecoming things which the Gentiles were guilty of, being delivered up to a reprobate mind. No wickedness so heinous, so contrary to the light of nature, to the law of nations, and to all the interests of mankind, but a reprobate mind will comply with it.

By the histories of those times, especially the accounts we have of the then prevailing dispositions and practices of the Romans, when the antient virtue of that commonwealth was so degenerated, it appears that these sins here mentioned, were then and there reigning, national sins.

Ver. 29, 30, 31. Here are no less than twenty three several sorts of sins and sinners specified. Here the devil's seat is, his name is legion, for they are many. It was time to have the gospel preached among them, for the world had need of reformation.

1. Sins against the first table: *Haters of God.* Here is the devil in his own colours, sin appearing sin. Could it be imagined, that rational creatures should hate the chiefest good? and depending creatures abhor the fountain of their being? And yet so it is. Every sin has in it a hatred of God; but some sinners are more open and avowed enemies to him than others, *Zech. xi. 8.*

Proud, and boasters cope with God himself, and put those crowns upon their own heads, which must be cast before the throne.

2. Sins

2. Sins against the second table. And those are especially instanced in, because in these things they had a clearer light. In general, unrighteousness, that is put first, for every sin is unrighteousness, it is withholding that which is due, perverting that which is right; it is especially put for second table sins, doing as we would not be done by.

Against the fifth commandment. *Disobedient to parents*, and *without natural affection, as fathers*, i. e. parents unkind and cruel to their children. Thus, when duty fails on one side, it commonly fails on the other. Disobedient children are justly punished with unnatural parents; and, on the contrary, unnatural parents with disobedient children.

Against the sixth commandment. *Wickedness*, doing mischief for mischief sake; *maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, (hats, contention) malignity, despiteful, implacable, unmerciful*; all expressions of that hatred of our brother, which is heart-murder.

Against the seventh commandment. *Fornication*; he mentions no more, having spoken before of other uncleannesses.

Against the eighth commandment. *Unrighteousness, covetousness*.

Against the ninth commandment. *Deceit, whisperers, backbiters, covenant-breakers*, lying and slandering.

Here are two generals not yet mentioned, *inventors of evil things, and without understanding*; wise to do evil, and yet having no knowledge to do good. The more deliberate and politick sinners are in inventing evil things, the greater is their sin. So quick of invention in sin, and yet without understanding, stark fools in the thoughts of God.

Here is enough to humble us all in the sense of our original corruption; for every heart by nature has in it the seed and spawn of all these sins.

In the close he mentions the aggravations of the sins, *ver. 32.*

1. They *knew the judgment of God*; i. e. (1.) They knew the law. The judgment of God is that which his justice requireth which because he is just, he judgeth meet to be done. 2. They knew the penalty; so it is explained here, they knew *that they which commit such things are worthy of death, eternal death*; their own consciences could not but suggest this to them, and yet they ventured upon it. It is a great aggravation of sin, when it is committed against knowledge, *Jam. iv. ult.* especially against the knowledge of the judgment of God. It is daring presumption to run upon the sword's point: it argues the heart much hardened, and very resolutely set upon sin.

2. They *not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*. The violence of some present temptation may hurry a man into the commission of such sins himself, in which the vitiated appetite may take a pleasure; but to be pleased with other peoples sins, is to love sin for sins sake: it is joining in a confederacy for the devil's kingdom and interest, *συνοδοῦσιν*. They do not only commit sin, but they defend and justify it, and encourage others to do the like. Our own sins are much aggravated by our concurrence with, and complacency in the sins of others.

Now, lay all this together, and then say, whether the Gentile world, lying under so much guilt and corruption, could be justified before God by any works of their own.

C H A P. II.

The scope of the two first chapters of this epistle may be gathered from Chap. iii. 9. we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. *This he had proved upon the Gentiles, Chap. i. now in this chapter he proves it upon the Jews, as appears by, ver. 17. thou art called a Jew.* 1. He proves in general, that Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level before the justice of God, to *ver. 17.* 2. He shews more particularly what sins the Jews were guilty of, notwithstanding their profession and vain pretensions. *ver. 17. to the end.*

1. **T**herefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self, for thou that judgest, dost the same things. 2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things. 3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thy self wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6. Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7. To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and ho-

nour, and immortality; eternal life: 8. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation, and wrath; 9. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jews first, and also of the Gentile. 10. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. 11. For there is no respect of persons with God. 12. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law, 13. (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15. Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another) 16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

In the former chapter the apostle had represented the state of the Gentile world to be as bad and black, as the Jews were ready enough to pronounce it. And now designing to shew that the state of the Jews was very bad too, and their sins in many respects more aggravated; to prepare his way, he sets himself in this part of the chapter to shew, that God would proceed upon equal terms of justice with Jews and Gentiles; and not with such a partial hand, as the Jews were apt to think he would use in their favour.

1. He arraigns them for their censoriousness and self-conceit, *ver. 1. Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.* As he expresseth himself in general terms, the admonition may reach those *many masters*, (*Jam. iii. 1.*) of whatever nation or profession they are; that assume to themselves a power to censure, controul, and condemn others. But he intends especially the Jews, and to them particularly he applies this general charge, *ver. 21. thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?*

The Jews were generally a proud sort of people that looked with a great deal of scorn and contempt upon the poor Gentiles, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock; while in the mean time they were themselves as bad and immoral; though not idolaters as the Gentiles, yet sacrilegious, *ver. 22.*

Therefore thou art inexcusable. If the Gentiles that had but the light of nature were inexcusable, *Chap. i. 20.* much more the Jews that had the light of the law, the revealed will of God, and so had greater helps than the Gentiles.

1. He asserts the invariable justice of the divine government, *ver. 2, 3.* To drive home the conviction, he here shews what a righteous God that is with whom we have to do, and how just in his proceedings. It is usual with the apostle Paul, in his writings, upon mention of some material point, to make large digressions upon it; as here concerning the justice of God, *ver. 2.* That the *judgment of God is according to truth*, i. e. according to the eternal rules of justice and equity; according to the heart, and not according to the outward appearance, *1 Sam. xvi. 7.* according to the works, and not with respect to persons; is a doctrine which *we are all sure of*, for he would not be God, if he were not just: but it behoves those especially to consider it, who condemn others of those things which they themselves are guilty of; and so while they practice sin, and persist in that practice, think to bribe the divine justice, by professing against sin, and exclaiming loudly upon others that are guilty; as if preaching against sin would atone for the guilt of it.

But observe how he puts it to the sinners conscience, *ver. 3. thinkest thou this, O man.* O man, a rational creature, a depending creature, made by God, subject under him, and accountable to him.

The case is so plain, that we may venture to appeal to the sinner's own thoughts; canst thou think that *thou shalt escape the judgment of God*? can the heart searching God be imposed upon by formal pretences, the righteous judge of all so bribed and put off? The most plausible politick sinners, that acquit themselves before men with the greatest confidence, yet cannot *escape the judgment of God*, cannot avoid being judged and condemned.

3. He draws up a charge against them, *ver. 4, 5.* consisting of two branches.

1. Slighting the goodness of God, *ver. 4. the riches of his goodness.* This is especially applicable to the Jews, that had singular tokens of the divine favour. Means are mercies, and the more light we sin against, the more law we sin against.

Low and mean thoughts of the divine goodness are at the bottom of a great deal of sin. There is in every wilful sin an interpretative contempt of the goodness of God; it is spurning at

at his bowels, particularly the goodness of his patience, his forbearance and long-suffering, taking occasion from thence to be so much the more bold in sin, *Eccl. viii. 11.*

Not knowing, i. e. not considering, not knowing practically, and with application, that *the goodness of God leadeth thee*, i. e. the design of it is to lead thee to repentance. It is not enough for us to know that God's goodness leads to repentance, but we must know that it leads us; thee in particular.

See here what method God takes to bring sinners to repentance. He leads them; not drives them like beasts, but leads them like rational creatures, allures them, *Hof. ii. 14.* and it is *goodness* that leads, bonds of love, *Hof. xi. 4.* comp. *Jer. xxxi. 3.* The consideration of the goodness of God, his common goodness to all, (the goodness of his providence, of his patience, and of his offers) should be effectual to bring us all to repentance: and the reason why so many continue in impenitency, is because they do not know and consider this.

Secondly, Provoking the wrath of God, *ver. 5.* The rise of this provocation is a *hard and impenitent heart*; and the ruin of sinners is their walking after such a heart, being led by it. To sin is to *walk in the way* of the heart; and when that is a hard and impenitent heart (contracted hardness by long custom, besides that which is natural) how desperate must the course needs be? The provocation is express by *treasuring up wrath*.

Those that go on in a course of sin, are *treasuring up unto themselves wrath*. A treasure notes abundance, it is a treasure that will be spending to eternity, and yet never exhausted; and yet sinners are still adding to it, as to a treasure.

Every wilful sin adds to the score, and will enflame the reckoning; it brings a *branch to their wrath* (as some read that *Ezek. viii. 17.* they put the branch to their nose.) A treasure notes secrecy; the treasury or magazine of wrath is the heart of God himself, in which it lies hid as treasures in some secret place, *foaled up*, see *Deut. xxxii. 34.* *Job xiv. 17.* But withal it notes reservation to some further occasion; as the treasures of the hail are reserved against the day of battle and war, *Job xxxviii. 22, 23.* these treasures will be broken open like the fountains of the great deep, *Gen. vii. 11.* it is treasured up *against the day of wrath*, when it will be dispensed by the wholesale, poured out by full vials. Though the present day be a day of patience and forbearance toward sinners, yet there is a day of wrath coming; wrath, and nothing but wrath. Indeed, every day is to sinners a day of wrath, for God is *angry with the wicked every day*, *Psal. vii. 11.* but there is the *great day of wrath* coming, *Rev. vi. 17.*

And that day of wrath will be *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. The wrath of God is not like our wrath, a heat and passion; no, fury is not in him, *Isa. xxvii. 4.* but it is a *righteous judgment*, his will to punish sin, because he hates it, as contrary to his nature. This *righteous judgment of God* is now many times concealed in the prosperity and success of sinners, but shortly it will be manifested before all the world, these seeming disorders set to rights, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, *Psal. l. 6.* Therefore judge nothing before the time.

4. He describes the measures by which God proceeds in his judgment.

Having mentioned *the righteous judgment of God* in *ver. 5.* he here illustrates that judgment, and the righteousness of it, and shews what we may expect from God, and by what rule he will judge the world.

The equity of distributive justice is the dispensing of frowns and favours with respect to deserts, and without respect of persons: such is the righteous judgment of God.

1. He will render to every man according to his deeds, *ver. 6.* A truth often mentioned in scripture, to prove that the Judge of all the earth doth right.

First, In dispensing his favours; and that is mentioned twice here, both in *ver. 7.* and *ver. 10.* for he delights to shew mercy. Observe,

1. The objects of his favour—*Them who by patient continuance*—by this we may try our interest in the divine favour and may from hence be directed what course to take that we may obtain it. Those whom the righteous God will reward, are,

First, Such as fix to themselves the right end; that *seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*; i. e. that glory and honour which is immortal, acceptance with God here, and for ever. There is a holy ambition, which is at the bottom of all practical religion.

This is seeking the kingdom of God, looking in our desires and aims as high as heaven, and resolved to take up with nothing short of it. This seeking implies a loss, sense of that loss, desire to retrieve it, and pursuits and endeavours consonant to those desires.

Secondly, Such as having fixed the right ends, adhere to the right way. *A patient continuance in well doing.*

1. There must be *well doing, working good*, *ver. 10.* It is not enough to know well, and speak well, and profess well, and promise well, but we must do well: not only do that which is good

for the matter of it, but for the manner of it. We must do it well.

2. A continuance in well-doing. Not for a fit and a start, like the morning cloud and the early dew; but we must endure to the end: it is perseverance that wins the crown.

3. A patient continuance. This patience respects not only the length of the work, but the difficulties of it, and the oppositions and hardships we may meet with in it. Those that will do well, and continue in it, must put on a deal of patience.

2. The product of his favour. He will render to such *eternal life*. Heaven is life, eternal life, and it is the reward of those that patiently continue in well doing; and it is called, *ver. 10.* *glory, honour, and peace*. Those that *seek for glory and honour*, *ver. 7.* shall have it. Those that seek for the vainglory and honour of this world, often miss of it, and are disappointed; but those that seek for immortal glory and honour, shall have it; and not only *glory and honour*, but *peace*. worldly glory and honour is commonly attended with trouble; but heavenly glory and honour has peace with it, undisturbed, everlasting peace.

Secondly, In dispensing his frowns, *ver. 8, 9.* *But unto them.* Observe,

1. The objects of his frowns. In general, those that do evil; more particularly described to be such as are contentious, and do not obey the truth. *Contentious* against God. Every wilful sin is a quarrel with God, it is *striving with our maker*, *Isa. xlv. 9.* The most desperate contention: The Spirit of God strives with sinners, *Gen. vi. 3.* and impenitent sinners strive against the Spirit, rebel against the light, *Job xxiv. 13.* hold fast deceit, strive to retain that sin which the Spirit strives to part them from. *Contentious, and do not obey the truth*. The truths of religion are not only to be known, but to be obeyed: they are directing, ruling, commanding truths; truths relating to practice. Disobedience to the truth is interpreted a striving against it. *But obey unrighteousness*; do what unrighteousness bids them do. Those that refuse to be the servants of truth, will soon be the slaves of unrighteousness.

2. The Products or instances of these frowns. *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*. These are the wages of sin: *Indignation and wrath*, the causes; *tribulation and anguish*, the necessary and unavoidable effects. And this *upon the souls*; souls are the vessels of that wrath, the subjects of that tribulation and anguish. Sin qualifies the soul for this wrath. The soul is that in, or of man, which alone is immediately capable of this indignation, and the impressions or effects of anguish there from. Hell is *eternal tribulation and anguish*, the product of infinite *wrath and indignation*. This comes of contending with God, of setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, *Isa. xxvii. 41.* Those that will not bow to his golden scepter, will certainly be broken by his iron rod.

Thus will God render to every man according to his deeds.

2. *There is no respect of persons with God*, *ver. 11.* As to the spiritual state, there is a respect of persons; but not as to outward relation or condition. Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level before God. This was Peter's remark upon the first taking down of the partition-wall, *Acts x. 34.* that God is no respecter of persons; and it is explained in the next words, that *in every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him*. God doth not save men with respect to their external privileges, or their barren knowledge and profession of the truth, but according as their state and disposition really is.

In dispensing both his frowns and favours, it is both to Jew and Gentile. If to *the Jews first*, who had greater privileges, and made a greater profession; yet *also to the Gentiles*, whose want of such privileges will neither excuse them from the punishment of their ill doing, nor bar them out from the reward of their well doing; see *Col. iii. 11.* For shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

5. He proves the equity of his proceedings with all, when he shall actually come to judge them, *ver. 12,—16.* upon this principle, that that which is the rule of man's obedience, is the rule of God's judgment.

Three degrees of light are revealed to the children of men.

1. The light of nature. That the Gentiles have, and by that they shall be judged. *As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law*; i. e. The unbelieving Gentiles that had no other guide but natural conscience, no other motive but common mercies, and had not the law of Moses, nor any supernatural revelation, shall not be reckoned with for the transgression of the law they never had, nor come under the aggravation of the Jews sin against, and judgment by, the written law; but they shall be judged by, as they sin against the law of nature, not only as it is in their hearts, corrupted, defaced and imprisoned in unrighteousness, but as in the uncorrupt original the judge keeps by him.

Further to clear this, *ver. 14, 15.* in a parenthesis, he evinces, that the light of nature was to the Gentiles instead of a written law. He had said, *ver. 12.* they had *sinned without law*; which looks like a contradiction; for where there is no law there is no transgression. But (saith he) though they had not the written law, (*Psal. cxlvii. 20.*) they had that which was equivalent, not to the ceremonial,

ceremonial, but to the moral law. They had the work of the law. He doth not mean that work which the law commands, as if they could produce a perfect obedience; but that work which the law doth. The work of the law is to direct us what to do, and to examine us what we have done. Now,

1. They had that which directed them what to do by the light of nature: by the force and tendency of their natural notions and dictates, they apprehended a clear and vast difference between good and evil. They did by nature the things contained in the law. They had a sense of justice and equity, honour and purity, love and charity: the light of nature taught obedience to parents, pity to the miserable, conservation of public peace and order; did forbid murder, stealing, lying, perjury. &c. Thus they were a law unto themselves.

2. They had that which examined them what they had done: Their conscience also bearing witness. They had that within them which approved and commended what was well done, and which reproached them for what was done amiss. Conscience is a witness, and first or last will bear witness, though for a time it may be bribed or brow-beaten. It is instead of a thousand witnesses, testifying of that which is most secret; and their thoughts accusing or excusing, i. e. passing a judgment upon the testimony of conscience, by applying the law to the fact. Conscience is that candle of the Lord, which was not quite put out, no not in the Gentile world. The heathen have witnessed to the comfort of a good conscience.

Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi. Hor.

And to the terror of a bad one.

Quos diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos, & surdo verberare cædit.

Juv. Satyr. 13.

Their thoughts the mean while, *μεταξύ ἀλλήλων*, among themselves, or one with another. The same light and law of nature that witnesseth against sin in them, and witnesseth against it in others, accused or excused one another. *Vicissim*, so some read it, by turns: according as they observed or broke these natural laws and dictates, their consciences did either acquit or condemn them. All which did evidence, that they had that which was to them instead of a law, which they might have been governed by, and which will condemn them, because they were not so guided and governed by it. So that the guilty Gentiles are left without excuse. God is justified in condemning them: They cannot plead ignorance, and therefore are like to perish, if they have not something else to plead.

2. The light of the law; that the Jews had, and by that they shall be judged. *Ver. 12. As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.* They sinned, not only having the law, but *ἐν νόμῳ*, in the law, in the midst of so much law, in the face and light of so pure and clear a law, the directions of which were so very full and particular, and the sanctions of it so very cogent and enforcing. These shall be judged by the law; i. e. their punishment shall be, as their sin is, so much the greater for their having the law. *The Jew first*, *ver. 9.* It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon. Thus Moses did accuse them, *John v. 45.* and they fell under the many stripes of him that knew his master's will and did it not, *Luke xii. 47.*

The Jews prided themselves very much in the law; but to confirm what he had said, the apostle shews, *ver. 13.* that their having, and hearing, and knowing the law, would not justify them, but their doing of it. The Jewish doctors bolstered up their followers with an opinion, that all that were Jews, how bad soever they lived, should have a place in the world to come. This the apostle here opposes: it was a great privilege that they had the law, but not a saving privilege, unless they lived up to the law they had; which it is certain the Jews did not, and therefore they had need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. We may apply it to the gospel: It is not hearing, but doing, that will save us, *John xiii. 17. Jam. i. 22.*

3. The light of the gospel: and according to that, those that enjoy the gospel shall be judged. *ver. 16. According to my gospel;* not meant of any fifth gospel written by Paul, as some conceit; or of the gospel written by Luke, as Paul's Amanuensis, (*Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 8.*) but the gospel in general, called Paul's, because he was a preacher of it. As many as are under that dispensation, shall be judged according to that dispensation, *Mark xvi. 16.*

Some refer those words, *according to my gospel*, to what he saith of the day of judgment: There will come a day of judgment, according as I have in my preaching often told you; and that will be the day of the final judgment both of Jews and Gentiles. It is good for us to get acquainted with what is revealed concerning that day.

1. There is a day set for a general judgment. *The day*, the great day, his day that is coming, *Psal. xxxvii. 13.*

2. The judgment of that day will be put into the hands of Jesus Christ. God shall judge by Jesus Christ, *Acts xvii. 31.* It will be part of the reward of his humiliation. Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, and more comfort to saints, than this, that Christ shall be the judge.

3. The secrets of men shall then be judged. Secret services shall be then rewarded, secret sins shall be then punished, hidden things shall be brought to light. That will be the great discovering day, when that which is now done in corners, shall be proclaimed to all the world.

17. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God: 18. And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law: 19. And art confident that thou thy self art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 21. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? thou that preacheest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22. Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23. Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written. 25. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. 26. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27. And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? 28. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. 29. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

In the latter part of the chapter the apostle directs his discourse more closely to the Jews, and shews what sins they were guilty of, notwithstanding their profession and vain pretensions. He had said, *ver. 13.* that not the hearers but the doers of the law are justified; and he here applies that great truth to the Jews. Observe,

1. He allows their profession, *ver. 17, 20.* and instanceth in their particular pretensions and privileges, which they prided themselves in; that they might see he did not condemn them out of ignorance of what they had to say for themselves; no, he knew the best of their cause.

First, They were a peculiar people; separated and distinguished from all other by their having the written law, and the special presence of God among them.

Thou art called a Jew; not so much in parentage as profession. It was a very honourable title, salvation was of the Jews; and this they were very proud of, to be a people by themselves; and yet many that were so called were the vilest of men. It is no new thing for the worst practices to be shrouded under the best names, for many of the synagogues of Satan to say they are Jews, *Rev. ii. 9.* for a generation of vipers to boast they have Abraham to their father, *Mat. iii. 7,—9.*

And retest in the law. That is, they took a pride in this, that they had the law among them, had it in their books, read it in their synagogues. They were mightily puffed up with this privilege, and thought this enough to bring them to heaven, though they did not live up to the law. To rest in the law, with a rest of complacency and acquiescence, is good; to rest in it with a rest of pride and slothfulness, and carnal security, is the ruin of souls. *The temple of the Lord*, *Jer. vii. 4.* *Bethel their confidence*, *Jer. xlviii. 13.* *Haughty because of the holy mountain*, *Zeph. iii. 11.* It is a dangerous thing to rest in external privileges, and not to improve them.

And makest thy boast of God. See how the best things may be perverted and abused. A believing, humble, thankful glorying in God, is the root and summary of all religion, *Psal. xxxiv. 2.* *Isa. xlv. ult. 1 Cor. i. 31.* But a proud vainglorious boasting in God, and in the outward profession of his name, is the root and summary of all hypocrisy. Spiritual pride is of all other the most dangerous.

Secondly, They were a knowing people; *ver. 18. and knowest his will*, *τὸ θέλημα*, the will. God's will is the will, the sovereign, absolute, irresistible will. The world will then, and not till then, be set to rights, when God's will is the only will, and all other wills are melted into it. They did not only know the truth of God, but the will of God, that which he would have them do. It is possible for an hypocrite to have a great deal of knowledge in the will of God.

And

And approveſt the things that are more excellent, δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα. Paul prays for it for his friends as a very great attainment, Phil. i. 10. Ἐἵς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα. Understand it, 1. Of a good apprehenſion in the things of God, reading it thus, *Thou diſcerneſt things that differ*, knoweſt how to diſtinguiſh between good and evil, to ſeparate between the precious and the vile, Jer. xv. 19. *to make a difference between the unclean and the clean*, Lev. xi. ult. Good and bad lie ſometimes ſo near together, that it is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh them; but the Jews, having the touchſtone of the law ready at hand, were, or, at leaſt, thought they were, able to diſtinguiſh, to cleave the hair in doubtful caſes. A man may be a good caſuiſt, and yet a bad Chriſtian; accurate in the notion, but looſe and careleſs in the application: Or we may, with *De Dieu*, underſtand controverſies by the τὰ διαφέροντα. A man may be well ſkilled in the controverſies of religion, and yet a ſtranger to the power of godlineſs. 2. Of a warm affection to the things of God, as we read it, *Approveſt the things that are excellent*. There are excellencies in religion, which an hypocrite may approve of; there may be a conſent of the practical judgment to the law that it is good, and yet that conſent overpowered by the luſts of the fleſh, and of the mind; — *video meliora, proboque deteriora ſequor*; — and it is common for finners to make that approbation an excuſe, which is really a very great aggravation of a ſinful courſe.

They got this acquaintance with, and affection to, that which is good, by being *inſtructed out of the law*, κατηχόμενοι, being catechiſed. The word ſignifies an early inſtruction from childhood: It is a great privilege and advantage to be well catechiſed betimes. It was the cuſtom of the Jews to take a great deal of pains in teaching their children when they were young, and all their leſſons were *out of the law*; it were well if Chriſtians were but as induſtrious to teach their children *out of the goſpel*.

Now this is called, ver. 20. *The form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law*, that is, the ſhew and appearance of it.

Thoſe, whoſe knowledge reſts in an empty notion, and doth not make an impreſſion on their hearts, have only the *form of it*, like a picture well drawn, and in good colours, but which wants life. A *form of knowledge* produceth but a *form of godlineſs*, 2 Timothy iii. 5. A *form of knowledge* may deceive men, but cannot impoſe upon the piercing eye of the heart-ſearching God. A *form* may be the vehicle of the power; but he that takes up with that only, is like a ſounding braſs, and a tinkling cymbal.

Thirdly, They were a teaching people, or, at leaſt, thought themſelves ſo, ver. 19, 20. *And art confident that thou thyſelf. Apply it*,

(1.) To the Jews in general; they thought themſelves *guides to the poor blind Gentiles that ſat in darkneſs*, were huge proud of this, that whoever would have the knowledge of God, muſt be beholden to them for it; all other nations muſt come to ſchool to them to learn *what is good, and what the Lord requires*; for they had the lively oracles.

(2.) To their Rabbi's, and doctors, and leading men among them, who were eſpecially thoſe that judged others, ver. 1. theſe prided themſelves much in the poſſeſſion they had got of Moſes's chair, and the deference which the vulgar paid to their dictates; and the apoſtle expreſſeth this in ſeveral terms, *a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkneſs, an inſtructor of the fooliſh, a teacher of babes*, the better to ſet forth their proud conceit of themſelves, and contempt of others: This was a ſtring they loved to be harping upon, heaping up titles of honour upon themſelves. The beſt work, when it is prided in, is unacceptable to God: It is good to *inſtruct the fooliſh, and to teach the babes*; but, conſidering our own ignorance, and folly, and inability to make theſe teachings ſucceſſful without God, there is nothing in it to be proud of.

2. He aggravates their provocations, ver. 21, 22, 23, 24. from two things.

(1.) That they ſinned againſt their knowledge and profeſſion, did that themſelves, which they taught others to avoid: *Thou that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thyſelf?* Teaching is a piece of that charity which begins at home, though it muſt not end there. It was the hypocrify of the Pharifees, that they did not do as they taught, Matt. xxiii. 3. but pulled down with their lives, what they built up with their preaching; for who will believe thoſe, who do not believe themſelves? Examples will govern more than rules. The greateſt obſtructors of the ſucceſs of the word, are thoſe whoſe bad lives contradict their good doctrine; that in the pulpit preach ſo well, that it is pity they ſhould ever come out; and out of the pulpit live ſo ill, that it is pity they ſhould ever come in. He inſtanceth in three particular ſins that did abound among the Jews.

Fiſt, *Stealing*. This is charged upon ſome that declared God's ſtatutes, Pſalm l. 16, 17. *When thou ſaweſt a thief, then thou conſentedſt to him*. The Pharifees are charged with devouring widows houſes, Matt. xxiii. 14. and that is the worſt of robberies.

Secondly, *Adultery*, ver. 22. This is likewise charged upon that ſinner, Pſalm l. 18. *Thou haſt been partaker with adulterers*.

Many of the Jewiſh Rabbins are ſaid to have been notorious for this ſin.

Thirdly, *Sacrilege*: Robbing in holy things, which were then, by ſpecial laws, dedicated and devoted to God. And this is charged upon thoſe that profeſſed to abhor idols. So the Jews did remarkably after their captivity in Babylon, that furnace parted them for ever from the dross of their idolatry, but they dealt very treacherouſly in the worſhip of God. It was in the latter days of the Old Teſtament church, that they were charged with *robbing of God in tythes and offerings*, Mal. iii. 8, 9. converting that to their own uſe, and to the ſervice of their luſts, which was, in a ſpecial manner, ſet apart for God. And this is almoſt equivalent to idolatry, though this ſacrilege was cloked with the abhorrence of idols. Thoſe will be ſeverely reckoned with another day, that, while they condemn ſin in others, do the ſame, or as bad, or worſe themſelves.

(2.) That they diſhonoured God by their ſin, ver. 23, 24. While God and his law were an honour to them, which they boaſted of, and prided themſelves in, they were a diſhonour to God and his law, by giving occaſion to thoſe that were without to reflect upon their religion, as if that did countenance and allow of ſuch things; which, as it is their ſin that make ſuch inferences (for the faults of profeſſors are not to be laid upon profeſſions) ſo it is their ſin that give occaſion for thoſe inferences, and will greatly aggravate their miſcarriages. This was the condemnation in David's caſe, that he had given great occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme, 2 Sam. xii. 14. And the apoſtle here refers to the ſame charge againſt their forefathers, as it is written, ver. 24. He doth not mention the place, becauſe he wrote this to thoſe that were inſtructed in the law (in labouring to convince, it is ſome advantage to deal with thoſe that have knowledge, and are acquainted with the ſcripture) but he ſeems to point at Iſa. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23. and 2 Sam. xii. 14. It is a lamentation that thoſe that were made to be to God for a name, and for a praiſe, ſhould be to him a ſhame and diſhonour. The great evil of the ſins of profeſſors, is the diſhonour done to God and religion by their profeſſion.

Blasphemed through you, i. e. you give the occaſion for it, it is through your folly and careleſneſs: The reproaches you bring upon yourſelves, reflect upon your God, and religion is wounded through your ſides. A good caution to profeſſors to walk circumſpectly. See 1 Tim. vi. 1.

3. He aſſerts the utter inſufficiency of their profeſſion to clear them from the guilt of theſe provocations, ver. 25,—29. *Circumciſion verily profiteth, if thou keep the law*, i. e. obedient Jews ſhall not loſe the reward of their obedience, but will gain this by their being Jews, that they have a clearer rule of obedience than the Gentiles have: God did not give the law, nor appoint circumciſion, in vain. This muſt be referred to the ſtate of the Jews before the ceremonial polity was aboliſhed, otherwiſe circumciſion to one that profeſſed faith in Chriſt was forbidden, Gal. v. 2. But he is here ſpeaking to the Jews whoſe Judaism would advantage them, if they would but live up to the rules and laws of it, but, if not, *thy circumciſion is made uncircumciſion*, i. e. thy profeſſion will do thee no good; thou wilt be no more juſtified than the uncircumciſed Gentiles, but more condemned, for ſinning againſt greater light. The uncircumciſed are in ſcripture branded as *unclean*, Iſa. lii. 1. as *out of the covenant*, Eph. ii. 11, 12. and wicked Jews will be dealt with as ſuch: See Jer. ix. 25, 26.

Further, to illuſtrate this,

1. He ſhews that the uncircumciſed Gentiles, if they live up to the light they have, ſtand upon the ſame level with the Jews: If they keep the righteouſneſs of the law, ver. 26. fulfil the law, ver. 27. i. e. by ſubmitting ſincerely to the conduct of natural light, perform the matter of your law. Some underſtand it, as putting the caſe of a perfect obedience to the law: If the Gentiles could perfectly keep the law, they ſhould be juſtified by it as well as the Jews. But it ſeems rather to be meant of ſuch an obedience as ſome of the Gentiles did attain to: The caſe of Cornelius will clear it: Though he was a Gentile, and uncircumciſed, yet, being a devout man, and one that feared God with all his houſe, Acts x. 2. he was accepted, ver. 4. Doubtleſs, there were many ſuch inſtances; and they were the uncircumciſion that kept the righteouſneſs of the law; and of ſuch he ſaith,

(1.) That they were accepted with God, as if they had been circumciſed; their uncircumciſion was counted for circumciſion: circumciſion was indeed to the Jews a commanded duty, but it was not to all the world a neceſſary condition of juſtification and ſalvation.

(2.) That their obedience was a great aggravation of the diſobedience of the Jews, that had the letter of the law, ver. 27. Judge thee, i. e. help to add to thy condemnation; by the letter and circumciſion doſt tranſgreſs. Obſerve, To carnal profeſſors the law is but the letter; they read it as a bare writing, but are not ruled by it as a law: They did tranſgreſs, not only notwithſtanding the letter and circumciſion, but by it, i. e. they thereby hardened themſelves in ſin: External privileges, if they do not do us good, do us hurt.

The obedience of those that enjoy less means, and make a less profession, will help to condemn those that enjoy greater means, and make a greater profession, but do not live up to it.

2. He describes the true circumcision, ver. 28, 29.

First, It is not that which is outward, in the flesh, and in the letter: This is not to drive us off from the observance of external institutions, they are good in their place, but from trusting to them, and resting in them as sufficient to bring us to heaven; taking up with a name to live, without being alive indeed: He is not a Jew, i. e. shall not be accepted of God as the seed of believing Abraham, nor owned as having answered the intention of the law: To be Abraham's children, is to do the works of Abraham, John viii. 39, 40.

Secondly, It is that which is inward, of the heart, and in the spirit: It is the heart that God looks at, the circumcising of the heart, that renders us acceptable to him: See Deut. xxx. 6. This is the circumcision that is not made with hands, Col. ii. 11, 12. Casting away the body of sin: So it is in the spirit, in our spirit as the subject, and wrought by God's Spirit as the author of it.

Thirdly, The praise thereof, though it be not of men, who judge according to outward appearance, yet it is of God, i. e. God himself will own and accept, and crown this sincerity; for he seeth not as man seeth: Fair pretences, and a plausible profession, may deceive men; but God cannot be so deceived; he sees through shews to realities. This is alike true of Christianity: He is not a Christian that is one outwardly, nor is that baptism which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian that is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

C H A P. III.

The apostle, in this chapter, carries on his discourse concerning justification: He had already proved the guilt both of Gentiles and Jews: Now, in this chapter, 1. He answers some objections that might be made against what he had said about the Jews, ver. 1,—9. 2. He asserts the guilt and corruption of mankind in common, both Jews and Gentiles, ver. 9,—19. 3. He argues from thence, that justification must needs be by faith, and not by the law; which he gives several reasons for, ver. 19. ad finem. The many digressions in his writings render his discourse sometimes a little difficult, but his scope is evident.

1. **W**HAT advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2. Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4. God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. 5. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 6. God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? 7. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? 8. And not rather, as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come: whose damnation is just. 9. What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10. As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: 11. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doth good, no not one. 13. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. 15. Their feet are swift to shed blood. 16. Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17. And the way of peace have they not known. 18. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Here he answers several objections, which might be made, to clear his way. No truth so plain and evident, but wicked wits and corrupt carnal hearts will have something to say against it; but divine truths must be cleared from cavil.

Obj. 1. If Jew and Gentile stand so much upon the same level before God, what advantage then hath the Jew? Hath not God often spoken with a great deal of respect for the Jews, as a non-such people? Deut. xxxiii. ult. a holy nation, a peculiar treasure, the seed of Abraham his friend? Did not he institute circumcision as a badge of their church membership, and a seal of their covenant relation to God? Now doth not this levelling doctrine deny them all such prerogatives, and reflect dishonour upon the ordinance of circumcision, as a fruitless, insignificant thing?

Ans. The Jews are, notwithstanding this, a people greatly privileged and honoured, have great means and helps, though these be not infallibly saving, ver. 2. Much every way. The door is open to the Gentiles as well as Jews, but the Jews have a fairer way up to this door, by reason of their church privileges, which are not to be undervalued, though many that have them perish eternally for not improving them. He reckons up many of the Jews privileges, Rom. ix. 4, 5. he here mentions but one, which is indeed *instar omnium*, that unto them were committed the oracles of God, i. e. the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses, which is called the lively oracles, Acts vii. 38. and those types, promises, and prophecies, which relate to Christ, and the gospel. The scriptures are the oracles of God; they are a divine revelation, they come from heaven, are of infallible truth, and of eternal consequence, as oracles. The Septuagint call the Urim and Thummim, the λόγια, the oracles. The scripture is our breast-plate of judgment. We must have recourse to the law, and to the testimony, as to an oracle. The gospel is called the oracles of God, Heb. v. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

Now these oracles were committed to the Jews; the Old Testament was written in their language; Moses, and the prophets, were of their nation, lived among them, preached and wrote primarily to and for the Jews: They were committed to them as trustees for succeeding ages and churches: The Old Testament was deposited in their hands, to be carefully preserved pure and uncorrupt, and so transmitted down to posterity.

The Jews were the Christians library-keepers, were intrusted with that sacred treasure for their own use and benefit in the first place, and then for the advantage of the world; and, in preserving the letter of the scripture, they were very faithful to their trust, did not lose one iota, or tittle; in which we are to acknowledge God's gracious care and providence: The Jews had the means of salvation, but they had not the monopoly of salvation.

Now this he mentions with a chiefly, *πρωτον μων* &c; this was their prime and principal privilege: The enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of a people, is to be put in the *imprimis* of their advantages, Deut. iv. 8.—xxxiii. 3. Psalm cxlvii. 20.

Obj. 2. Against what he had said of the advantages the Jews had in the lively oracles, some might object the unbelief of many of them. To what purpose were the oracles of God committed to them, when so many of them, notwithstanding these oracles, continue strangers to Christ, and enemies to his gospel? Some did not believe, ver. 2.

Ans. It is very true, that some, nay, most of the present Jews, do not believe in Christ; but shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? The apostle startles at such a thought; God forbid! The infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews could not invalidate and overthrow those prophecies of the Messiah which were contained in the oracles committed to them. Christ will be glorious, though Israel be not gathered, Isa. xlix. 5. God's word shall be accomplished, his purposes performed, and all his ends answered, though there be a generation that, by their unbelief, go about to make God a liar.

Let God be true, but every man a liar, i. e. let us abide by this principle, that God is true to every word which he has spoken, and will let none of his oracles fall to the ground, though thereby we give the lie to man; better question and overthrow the credit of all the men in the world, than doubt of the faithfulness of God.

What David saith in his haste, Psalm cxvi. 11. that all men are liars, Paul here asserts deliberately: Lying is a limb of that old man which we every one of us come into the world clothed with: All men are fickle, and mutable, and given to change; vanity, and a lie, Psalm lxii. 9. altogether vanity, Psalm xxxix. 5. All men are liars, compared with God. It is very comfortable, when we find every man a liar, no faith in man, that God is faithful: When they speak vanity every one with his neighbour, it is very comfortable to think, that the words of the Lord are pure words, Psalm xii. 2, 6.

For the further proof of this, he quotes Psalm li. 4. That thou mightest be justified. The design of which is to shew, 1. That God doth and will preserve his own honour in the world, notwithstanding the sins of men. 2. That it is our duty, in all our conclusions concerning ourselves and others, to justify God, and to assert and maintain his justice, truth, and goodness, however it goes. David lays a load upon himself in his confession, that he might justify God, and acquit him from any injustice. So here, let the credit and reputation of man shift for itself, the matter is

not great whether it sink or swim; let us hold fast this conclusion, how specious soever the premisses may be to the contrary, that *the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*. Thus is God justified in his sayings, and cleared when he judgeth, as it is *Psal. li. 4.* or, when *he is judged*, as it is here rendered. When men presume to quarrel with God and his proceedings, we may be sure the sentence will go on God's side.

Obj. 3. Carnal hearts might from hence take occasion to encourage themselves in sin. He had said, that the universal guilt and corruption of mankind gave occasion to the manifestation of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ. Now it may be suggested, if all our sin be so far from overthrowing God's honour, that it doth commend it, and his ends are secured, so that there is no harm done, is it not unjust for God to punish our sin and unbelief so severely? If the unrighteousness of the Jews gave occasion to the calling in of the Gentiles, and so to God's greater glory, why are the Jews so much faulted? *ver. 5.* *If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? what inference may be drawn from thence? Is God unrighteous?* *μὴ ἀδικῇ ὁ Θεός.* *Is not God unrighteous,* (so it may be read more in the form of an objection) *who taketh vengeance?* Unbelieving hearts will gladly take any occasion to quarrel with the equity of God's proceedings, and to condemn him that is most just, *Job xxxiv. 17.* *I speak as a man,* i. e. I object this as the language of carnal hearts; it is suggested like a man, a vain, foolish, proud creature.

Ans. *God forbid.* Far be it from us to imagine such a thing. Suggestions, that reflect dishonour upon God, and his justice, and holiness, are rather to be startled at than parlied with. Get thee behind me, Satan; never entertain such a thought.

For then how shall God judge the world? *ver. 6.* The argument is much the same with that of Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 25.* *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* no doubt he shall. If he was not infinitely just and righteous he would be unfit to be the judge of all the earth. *Shall even he that hateth right govern?* *Job xxxiv. 17. comp. ver. 18, 19.* The sin hath never the less of malignity and demerit in it, though God bring glory to himself out of it. It is only accidentally that sin commends God's righteousness: No thanks to the sinner for that, who intends no such thing.

The consideration of God's judging the world should for ever silence all our doubtings of, and reflexions upon his justice and equity. It is not for us to arraign the proceedings of such an absolute sovereign: The sentence of the supreme court, from whence lies no appeal, is not to be called in question.

Obj. 4. The former objection is repeated and prosecuted, *ver. 7, 8.* for proud hearts will hardly be beaten out of their refuge of lyes, but will hold fast the deceit. But his putting off the objection in its own colours is sufficient to answer it: *If the truth of God has more abounded through my lye;* he supposes the sophisters to follow their objection thus, *If my lye,* i. e. my sin, (for there is something of a lye in every sin, especially in the sins of professors) have occasioned the glorifying of God's truth and faithfulness, why *should I be judged,* and condemned as a sinner? and not rather from thence take encouragement to go on on in my sin, that grace may abound? An inference which at first sight appears too black to be argued, and fit to be cast out with abhorrence. Daring sinners take occasion to boast in mischief, because the *goodness of God endures continually*, *Psal. lii. 1.* *Let us do evil that good may come,* is oftner in the heart than in the mouth of sinners, so justifying themselves in their wicked ways. Mentioning this wicked thought, he observes in a parenthesis, that there were those who charged such doctrines as this upon Paul and his fellow-ministers; *some affirm that we say so.* It is no new thing for the best of God's people and ministers to be charged with holding and teaching such things as they do most detest and abhor; and it is not to be thought strange, when our Master himself was said to be in league with Beelzebub. Many have been reproached as if they had said that, the contrary of which they maintain: it is an old artifice of Satan's to cast dirt upon Christ's ministers, *fortiter calumniari aliquid adhibebit.* The best men and the best truths are subject to slander. Bishop Sanderson makes a farther remark upon this, *as we be slanderously reported,* *βλασφημῶμεθα.* Blasphemy in scripture usually signifies the highest degree of slander, speaking ill of God. The slander of a minister and his regular doctrine, is a more than ordinary slander, it is a kind of blasphemy; not for his person's sake, but for his calling's sake, and his work's sake. *1 Thess. v. 8.*

Ans. He saith no more by way of confutation, but that whatever they themselves may argue, the damnation of those is just. Some understand it of the slanderers; God will justly condemn those who unjustly condemn his truth. Or rather it is to be applied to those who embolden themselves in sin, under a pretence of Gods getting glory to himself out of it. Those who deliberately *do evil, that good may come of it,* will be so far from escaping under shelter of that excuse, that it will rather justify their damnation, and render them the more inexcusable; for sinning upon such a surmise, and in such a confidence, argues a great deal both of the wit, and of the will in the sin; a wicked will deliberately to chuse the evil, and a

wicked wit to palliate it with the pretence of good arising from it: therefore their damnation is just; and whatever excuses of this kind they may now please themselves with, they will none of them hold water in the great day; but God will be justified in his proceedings, and all flesh, even the proud flesh that now lifts up it self against him, shall be silent before him.

Some think Paul doth herein refer to the approaching ruin of the Jewish church and nation, which their obstinacy and self-justification in their unbelief hastened upon them apace.

Paul having removed these objections, he next revives his assertion of the general guilt and corruption of mankind in common, both Jews and Gentiles, *ver. 9 — 19.*

Are we better than they, i. e. we Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God? doth that recommend us to God, or will that justify us? No, by no means. Or, are we Christians, Jews and Gentiles, so much better antecedently than the unbelieving part, as to have merited God's grace? alas! no before free grace made the difference, those of us that had been Jews, and those that had been Gentiles were all alike corrupted.

They are all under sin. 1. Under the guilt of sin; under it, as under a sentence; under it, as under a bond, by which they are bound over to eternal ruin and damnation; under it, as under a burden, *Pf. xxxviii. 4.* that will sink them to the lowest hell: we are guilty before God, *ver. 19.* 2. Under the government and dominion of sin; under it, as under a tyrant, and cruel task-master; enslaved to it; under it, as under a yoke; under the power of it, sold to work wickedness.

And this he had proved, *ᾠρητιασάμεθα.* It is a law-term; we have charged them with it, and have made good our charge, we have proved the indictment, we have convinced them by the notorious evidence of the fact.

This charge and conviction he here further illustrates by several scriptures out of the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt, depraved state of all men, till grace restrain or change them: so that herein as in a glass we may all of us behold our natural face. *Ver. 10, 11, 12.* is taken from *Pf. xiv. 1, 2, 3.* which is again repeated as a very weighty truth, *Pf. liii. 1, 2, 3.* The rest that follows here is found in the Septuagint translation of the xivth psalm, which some think the apostle chuses to follow as better known: but I rather think that Paul took these passages from other places of scripture here referred to; but in later copies of the LXX they were all added in *Pf. xiv.* from this discourse of Paul. It is observable, that to prove the general corruption of nature, he quotes some scriptures which speak of the particular corruptions of particular persons, as of Doeg, *Pf. cxl. 3.* of the Jews, *Isa. lix. 7, 8.* which shews that the same sins that are committed by one are in the nature of all. The times of David and Isaiah were some of the better times, and yet to their days he refers. What is said, *Pf. xiv.* is expressly spoken of *all the children of men*, and that upon a particular view and inspection made by God himself: the *Lord looked down*, as upon the old world, *Gen. vi. 5.* And this judgment of God was according to truth. He that, when himself had made all, looked upon every thing that he had made, and behold all was very good; now that man had marred all, looked, and behold all was very bad.

Let us take a view of the particulars. Observe,

1. That which is habitual, which is twofold.

1. An habitual defect of every thing that is good. *There is none righteous,* i. e. none that hath an honest good principle of virtue, or is governed by such a principle; none that retains any thing of that image of God, consisting in righteousness, wherein man was created. *No not one;* implying, that if there had been but one, God would have found him out. When all the world was corrupt, God had his eye upon one righteous Noah. Even those who through grace are justified and sanctified, were none of them righteous by nature: no righteousness is born with us: the man after God's own heart owns himself conceived in sin.

Ver. 11. None that understandeth. The fault lies in the corruption of the understanding; that is blinded, depraved, perverted. Religion and righteousness have so much reason on their side, that if people had but any understanding, they would be better, and do better. But they do not understand. Sinners are fools: *None that seeketh after God,* i. e. none that has any regard to God, any desire after him. Those may justly be reckoned to have no understanding, that do not seek after God. The carnal mind is so far from seeking after God, that really it is enmity against him.

They are together become unprofitable, *ver. 12.* Those that have forsaken God, soon grow good for nothing; unless burdens of the earth. Those that are in a state of sin, are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun; for it follows, *there is none that doth good;* no, not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not, *Eccl. vii. 20.* Even in those actions of sinners that have some goodness in them, there is a fundamental error in the principle and end; so that it may be said there is none that doth good: *Malum oritur ex quolibet defectu.*

2. An habitual defection to every thing that is evil: *they are all gone out of the way.* No marvel those miss the right way, that do not seek after God, the highest end. God made man in the way, set him in right, but he hath forsaken it. The corruption of mankind is an apostasy.

2. That

2. That which is actual. And what good can be expected from such a degenerate race? He instances,
First. In their words, *ver. 13, 14.* in three things particularly.

1. Cruelty. Their throat is an *open sepulchre*; ready to swallow up the poor and innocent; waiting an opportunity to do mischief, like the old serpent, seeking to devour, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer. And when they do not openly avow this cruelty, and vent it publicly, yet they are underhand intending mischief; the *poison of asps is under their lips*, Jam. iii. 8. the most venomous and incurable poison, with which they blast the good name of their neighbour by reproaches, and aim at his life by false witness. These passages are borrowed from *Psal. v. 9.* and *cxl. 3.*

2. Cheating: *With their tongues they have used deceit.* Herein they shew themselves the devil's children, for he is a liar, and the father of lyes. They *have used* it: it intimates, that they make a trade of lying; it is their constant practice, especially belying the ways and people of God.

3. Cursing: reflecting upon God, and blaspheming his holy name; wishing evil to their brethren: Their mouth is full of *cursing and bitterness*. This is mentioned as one of the great sins of the tongue, *Jam. iii. 9.* But those that thus love cursing, shall have enough of it, *Psal. cix. 17, 18, 19.* How many who are called Christians, do, by these sins, evidence that they are still under the reign and dominion of sin, still in the condition that they were born in.

Secondly, In their ways. *Ver. 15, 16, 17.* Their feet are swift to shed blood, i. e. they are very industrious to compass any cruel design, ready to lay hold on all such opportunities. Wherever they go, *destruction and misery* goes along with them; there are their companions; destruction and misery to the people of God, to the country and neighbourhood where they live, to the land and nation, and to themselves at last. Besides the *destruction and misery* that is at the end of their ways, death is the end of these things, there is destruction and misery in their ways; their sin is its own punishment: a man needs no more to make him miserable, than to be a slave to his sins. And *the way of peace have they not known*; i. e. they know not how to preserve peace with others, nor how to obtain peace for themselves. They may talk for peace, such a peace as is in the devil's palace while he keeps it, but they are strangers to all true peace; they know not the things that belong to their peace. These are quoted from *Prov. i. 16.* *Isa. lix. 7, 8.*

3. The root of all this we have, *ver. 18.* There is no fear of God before their eyes. The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in an awful and serious regard to the word and will of God, as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end. Wicked people have not this before *theirs eyes*: i. e. they do not steer by it: they are governed by other rules, aim at other ends. This is quoted from *Psal. xxxvi. 1.* Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. The fear of God would lay a restraint upon our spirits, and keep them right, *Neb. v. 15.* When once fear is cast off, prayer is restrained, *Job xv. 4.* and then all goes to wrack and ruin quickly.

So that we have here a short account of the general depravedness and corruption of mankind; and may say, O Adam! what hast thou done? God made man upright, but thus he hath sought out many inventions.

19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God, 20. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. 22. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: 23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26. To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 27. Where is boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. 29. Is he the

God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. 36. Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Paul doth from all this infer, that it is in vain to look for justification by the works of the law, and that it is to be had only by faith; which is the point he hath been all along proving, from *chap. i. 17.* and which he lays down, *ver. 28.* as the summary of his discourse, with a *Q. E. D.* we conclude, that *a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law*; neither the deeds of the first law of pure innocence, which left no room for repentance; nor the deeds of the law of nature, how highly soever improved; nor the deeds of the ceremonial law, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; nor the deeds of the moral law, which are included; for he speaks of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, and those works which might be matter of boasting. Man, in his depraved state, under the power of such corruption, could never, by any works of his own, gain acceptance with God; but it must be resolved purely into the free grace of God, given through Jesus Christ, to all true believers, that receive it as a free gift.

If we had never sinned, our obedience to the law would have been our righteousness; do this and live: but having sinned, and being corrupted, nothing that we can do will atone for our former guilt. It was by their obedience to the moral law that the Pharisees looked for justification, *Luke xviii. 11.*

Now there are two things from which the apostle here argues; the *guiltiness of man*, to prove that we cannot be justified by the works of the law; and *the glory of God*, to prove that we must be justified by faith.

1. He argues from *man's guiltiness*, to shew the folly of expecting justification by the works of the law. The argument is very plain; we can never be justified and saved by the law that we have broken. A convicted traitor can never come off by pleading the statute of 25 *Edw. iii.* for that law discovers his crime, and condemns him: and indeed if he had never broken it, he might have been justified by it; but now it is past that, he hath broke it, and there is no way of coming off, but by pleading the act of indemnity, upon which he hath surrendered and submitted himself, and humbly and penitently claiming the benefit of it, and casting himself upon it.

Now concerning the guiltiness of man,

First, He fastens it particularly upon the Jews; for they were the men that made their boast of the law, and set up for a justification by it. He had quoted several scriptures out of the Old Testament to shew this corruption: Now, saith he, *ver. 19.* *This that the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law*; i. e. this conviction belongs to the Jews as well as others, for it is written in their law. The Jews boasted of their being under the law, and placed a great deal of confidence in that; but, saith he, the law convicts and condemns you, you see it doth. That *every mouth may be stopped*; i. e. that all boasting may be silenced. See the method that God takes, both in justifying and condemning; he stops every mouth: those that are justified, have their mouths stopt by a humble conviction; those that are condemned, have their mouths stopt too; for they shall at last be convinced, *Jude 15.* and sent *speechless* to hell, *Mat. xxii. 12.* *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*, *Psal. cvii. 42.*

Secondly, He extends it in general to all the world: that *all the world may become guilty before God*. If the world lies in wickedness, *1 John v. 19.* be sure it is guilty. *May become guilty*, i. e. may be proved guilty, liable to punishment, all by nature *children of wrath*, *Eph. ii. 2.* they must all plead guilty; those that stand most upon their own justification, will certainly be cast. *Guiltiness before God* is a dreadful word, before an all-seeing God, that is not, nor can be deceived in his judgment; before a just and righteous Judge, who will by no means clear the guilty. All are guilty, and therefore all have need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. *Ver. 23.* *For all have sinned*, i. e. all are sinners by nature, by practice, and *have come short of the glory of God*; i. e. have failed of that which is the chief end of man. *Come short*, as the archer comes short of the mark, as the runner comes short of the prize; so come short, as not only not to win, but to be great losers. *Come short of the glory of God.* 1. Come short of glorifying God. See *chap. i. 21.* *They glorified him not as God*. Man was placed in the top of the visible creation, actively to glorify that great Creator whom the inferior creatures could glorify only objectively: but man, by sin, comes short of this, and instead of glorifying God, doth dishonour him. It is a very melancholy consideration, to look upon the children of men, that were made to glorify God, and to think how few there be that do it. 2. Come short of glorifying before God. There is no bragging of innocency: if we go about to glory before God, to boast of any thing we are, or have, or do, this will be an everlasting stoppel, that we have *all sinned*, and that will silence us. We may glory before men, who are short sighted, and cannot search our hearts; who are corrupt,

as we are, and well enough pleased with sin; but there is no glorying before God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. 3. Come short of *being glorified by God*. Come short of justification and acceptance with God, which is glory begun; come short of that holiness and sanctification, which is the glorious image of God upon man; and have overthrown all hopes and expectations of being glorified with God in heaven, by any righteousness of their own. It is impossible now to get to heaven in the way of spotless innocency; that passage is blocked up; there is a cherub and a flaming sword set to keep that way to the tree of life.

Thirdly, Further, to drive us off from expecting justification by the law, he ascribes this conviction to the law; *ver. 20. For by the law is the knowledge of sin*. That law which convicts and condemns us, can never justify us. The law is the straight rule, that *rectum* which is *index sui & obliqui*; it is the proper use and intendment of the law, to open our wound, and therefore not likely to be the remedy. That which is searching, is not sanative. Those that would know sin, must get the knowledge of the law, in its strictness, extent, and spiritual nature. If we compare our own hearts and lives with the rule, we shall discover wherein we have turned aside: Paul made this use of the law, *Rom. vii. 9. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight*. Observe,

1. No flesh shall be justified, i. e. no man, no corrupted man, *Gen. vi. 3. for that he also is flesh*; sinful and depraved; therefore not justified, because we are flesh. The corruption that remains in our nature will for ever obstruct any justification by our own works, which coming from flesh, must needs taste of the cask, *Job xiv. 3.*

2. Not justified in his sight. He doth not deny that justification which was by the deeds of the law in the sight of the church: they were in their church estate, as embodied in a polity, a holy people, a nation of priests; but as the conscience stands in relation to God, in his sight, we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. The apostle refers to *Psal. cxliii. 2.*

2. He argues from God's glory, to prove, that justification must be expected only by faith in Christ's righteousness. There is no justification by the works of the law. Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is their no hope? Is the wound become incurable because of transgression? No, blessed be God, it is not, *ver. 21, 22.* there is another way laid open for us, *the righteousness of God without the law is manifested* now under the gospel. Justification may be obtained without the keeping of Moses's law; and this is called *the righteousness of God*, i. e. righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting; righteousness which he confers upon us; as the Christian armour is called *the armour of God*, *Eph. vi. 11.*

Now concerning this righteousness of God, observe,

1. That it is manifested. The gospel way of justification is a high way, a plain way, it is laid open for us: the brazen serpent is lifted up upon the pole; we are not left to grope our way in the dark, but it is manifested to us.

2. It is without the law. Here he obviates the method of the Judaizing Christians, who would needs join Christ and Moses together; owning Christ for the Messiah, and yet too fondly retaining the law, keeping up the ceremonies of it, and imposing it upon the Gentile converts: no, faith he, it is without the law. The righteousness that Christ hath brought in is a complete righteousness.

3. Yet it is witnessed by the law and the prophets; i. e. there were types and prophecies, and promises in the Old Testament, that pointed at this. The law is so far from justifying us, that it directs us to another way of justification; points at Christ as our righteousness, to whom bear all the prophets witness. See *Acts x. 43.* This might recommend it to the Jews, who were so fond of the law and the prophets.

4. It is by the faith of Jesus Christ, i. e. that faith which hath Jesus Christ for its object; an anointed Saviour, so Jesus Christ signifies. Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour, in all his three anointed offices, as prophet, priest, and king; trusting in him, accepting of him, and adhering to him in all these. It is by this that we become interested in that righteousness which God hath ordained, and which Christ hath brought in.

5. It is to all, and upon all them that believe. In this expression he inculcates that which he had been often harping upon, that Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, stand upon the same level, and are alike welcome to God through Christ; *for there is no difference*. Or, it is *eis πάντας*, it is to all, offered to all in general; the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves: but it is *ἐν παντί*, upon all that believe; not only tendered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe; they are upon their believing interested in it, and entitled to all the benefits and privileges of it.

But now, how is this for God's glory?

1. It is for the glory of his grace: *ver. 24. Justified freely by his grace*; *δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι*. It is by his grace; not by the grace wrought in us, as the papists say, confounding justification and sanctification; but by the gracious favour of God to us, without any merit in us, so much as foreseen: And to make it the more emphatical, he saith, it is *freely by his grace*, to shew that it must be understood of grace in the most proper and genuine sense. It is said that Joseph found grace in the sight of his master, *Gen. xxxix. 4.* but there was a reason; he saw that what he did prospered;

there was something in Joseph to invite that grace: but the grace of God communicated to us, comes *freely, freely*; it is free grace, meer mercy; nothing in us to deserve such favours: no, it is all *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. It comes freely to us, but Christ bought it and paid dear for it; which yet is so ordered, as not to derogate from the honour of free grace: Christ's purchase is no bar to the freeness of God's grace; for grace provided and accepted this vicarious satisfaction.

2. It is for the glory of his justice and righteousness: *ver. 25, 26. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, &c.*

Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice, typified by the *ἱλαστήριον*, or mercy seat under the law. He is our throne of grace, in and through whom atonement is made for sin, and our persons and performances are accepted of God, *1 John ii. 2.* He is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it; our priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ, as in his mercy seat, reconciling the world unto himself.

2. God hath set him forth to be so: God, the party offended, makes the first overtures towards a reconciliation, appoints the days-man; *ἀρτίστα*, fore-ordained him to this, in the counsels of his love, from eternity, appointed, anointed him to it, qualified him for it, and has exhibited him to a guilty world as their propitiation. See *Mat. iii. 17. & xvii. 5.*

3. That by faith in his blood we become interested in this propitiation. Christ is the propitiation, there is the healing plaster provided: Faith is the applying of this plaster to the wounded soul. And this faith in the business of justification hath a special regard to *the blood of Christ*, as that which made the atonement; for such was the divine appointment, that without blood there should be no remission, and no blood but his would do it effectually. Here may be an allusion to the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices under the law, as *Exod. xxiv. 8.* Faith is the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is the blood of sprinkling.

4. That all who by faith are interested in this propitiation, have *the remission of their sins that are past*. It was for this that Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, in order to remission, to which the reprieves of his patience and forbearance were a very encouraging preface. *Through the forbearance of God*. Divine patience hath kept us out of hell, that we might have space to repent and get to heaven.

Some refer the *sins that are past* to the sins of the Old Testament saints, which were pardoned for the sake of the atonement which Christ in the fulness of time was to make, which looked backward as well as forward. *Past through the forbearance of God*. It is owing to the divine forbearance that we were not taken away in the very act of sin.

Several Greek copies make *ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τῆ θεῶ* to begin, *ver. 26.* and they note two precious fruits of Christ's merit and God's grace, 1. Remission: *διὰ τὴν παράσιν*, and, 2. Reprieves, the *forbearance* of God. It is owing to the master's goodness, and the dresser's mediation that barren trees are let alone in the vineyard; and in both God's righteousness is declared, in that without a mediator and a propitiation he would not only not pardon, but not so much as forbear, not spare a moment: it is owing to Christ that there is ever a sinner on this side hell.

5. That God doth in all this declare his righteousness. This he insists upon with a great deal of emphasis, *to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness*. It is repeated as that which has in it something surprising. He declares his righteousness.

1. In the propitiation itself. Never was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God, as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son, he did not spare him, because he had made himself *sin for us*, *2 Cor. v. ult.* The iniquities of us all being laid upon him, though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, *Isa. liii. 10.*

2. In the pardon upon that propitiation; so it follows, by way of explication, *that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth*. Mercy and truth are so met together, *righteousness and truth* have so kissed each other, that it is now become not only an act of grace and mercy, but an act of righteousness in God to pardon the sins of penitent believers, having accepted the satisfaction that Christ, by dying, made to his justice for them. It would not stand with his justice to demand the debt of the principal, when the surety hath paid it, and he hath accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See *1 John i. 9.* He is just, i. e. faithful to his word.

3. It is for God's glory; for *boasting is thus excluded*, *ver. 27.* God will have the great work of sinners justification and salvation carried on from first to last in such a way as might exclude boasting, that no flesh might glory in his presence, *1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31.* Now if justification were by the works of the law, boasting would not be excluded: How should it? If we were saved by our own works, we might put the crown upon our own heads: But the law of faith, i. e. the way of justification by faith, doth for ever exclude boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne: therefore it is most for God's glory that thus we should be justified.

Observe,

Observe, He speaks of *the law of faith*: Believers are not left lawless; *faith is a law*, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth; and yet, because it acts in a strict and close dependence upon Jesus Christ, it *excludes boasting*.

From all this he draws his conclusion, *ver. 28. That a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.*

Lastly, In the close of the chapter he shews the extent of this privilege of justification by faith, and that it is not the peculiar privilege of the Jews, but pertains to the Gentiles also; for he had said, *ver. 22. that there is no difference*: And as to this,

1. He asserts, and proves it, *ver. 29, 30. Is he the God of the Jews only?* He argues from the absurdity of such a supposition. Can it be imagined that a God of infinite love and mercy should limit and confine his favours to that little perverse people of the Jews, leaving all the rest of the children of men in a condition eternally desperate? That would by no means agree with the idea we have of the divine goodness, for his *tender mercies are over all his works*; therefore it is one God of grace that justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith, i. e. both in one and the same way; however, the Jews, in favour of themselves, will needs fancy a difference, really there is no more difference than between *by* and *through*, i. e. no difference at all.

2. He obviates an objection, *ver. 31. as if this doctrine did nullify the law*, which they knew came from God; no, faith he, though we do say that the law will not justify us, yet we do not therefore say, that it was given in vain, or is of no use to us; no, *we establish the right use of the law*, and secure its standing, by fixing it on the right basis: The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future; though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it as a rule, in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and so are so far from overthrowing, that *we establish the law*. Let those consider this, who deny the obligation of the moral law to believers.

C H A P. IV.

The great gospel doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, was so very contrary to the notions the Jews had learnt from those that sat in Moses's chair, that it would hardly go down with them; and therefore the apostle insists very largely upon it, and labours much in the confirmation and illustration of it.

He had before proved it by reason and argument, now, in this chapter, he proves it by example, which, in some places, serves for confirmation, as well as illustration. Now the example he pitches upon is that of Abraham, whom he chooseth to instance in, because the Jews gloried much in their relation to Abraham, put it in the first rank of their external privileges, that they were Abraham's seed, and truly they had Abraham to their father: Therefore this instance was likely to be more taking and convincing to the Jews than any other. His argument stands thus, All that are saved are justified in the same way as Abraham was; but Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works; therefore all that are saved are so justified; for it would easily be acknowledged that Abraham was the father of the faithful.

Now this is an argument, not only a *pari*, as they say, but a *fortiori*. If Abraham, a man so famous for works, so eminent in holiness, and obedience, was nevertheless justified by faith only, and not by those works; how much less can any other, especially any of those that spring from him, and come so far short of him in works, set up for a justification by their own works? And it proves likewise, *ex abundantia*, as some observe, that we are not justified, no, not by those good works which flow from faith, as the matter of our righteousness, for such were Abraham's works, and are we better than he?

The whole chapter is taken up with his discourse upon this instance, and there is this in it, which hath a particular reference to the close of the foregoing chapter, where he had asserted, that, in the business of justification, Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level.

Now, in this chapter, with a great deal of cogency of argument, 1. He proves that Abraham was justified not by works, but by faith, *ver. 1,—8.* 2. He observes when and why he was so justified, *ver. 9,—17.* 3. He describes and commends that faith of his, *ver. 17,—22.* 4. He applies all this to us, *ver. 23,—25.* And if he had now been in the school of Tyrannus, he could not have disputed more argumentatively.

1. **W**HAT shall we say then, that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
2. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.
3. For what faith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
4. Now

to him that worketh, is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt. 5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Here the apostle proves that Abraham was justified not by works, but by faith. Those that, of all men, contended most vigorously for a share in righteousness by the privileges they enjoyed, and the works they performed, were the Jews, and therefore he appeals to the case of Abraham their father, and puts his own name to the relation, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews; *Abraham our father*. Now sure his prerogative must needs be as great as theirs, who claim it as his *seed according to the flesh*.

Now *what hath he found?* All the world is seeking; but while the most are wearying themselves for very vanity, none can be truly reckoned *to have found*, but those who are justified before God; and thus Abraham, like a wise merchant seeking goodly pearls, found this one pearl of great price.

What has he found, καὶ εὗρεν, as pertaining to the flesh? i. e. by circumcision, and his external privileges and performances? Those the apostle calls *flesh*, Phil. iii. 3. Now what did he get by these? was he justified by them? was it the merit of his works that recommended him to God's acceptance? No, by no means; which he proves by several arguments.

1. If he was justified by works, room would be left for *boasting*, which must for ever be excluded: If so, *he hath whereof to glory*, *ver. 2.* which is not to be allowed. But might the Jews say, was not his name made great? *Gen. xii. 2.* and then *might not he glory?* Yes, but not before God; he might deserve well of men, but he could never merit of God: Paul himself had *whereof to glory before men*, and we have him sometime glorying in it, yet with humility; but *nothing to glory in before God*, 1 Cor. iv. 4. Phil. iii. 8, 9. So Abraham.

Observe, He takes it for granted, that man must not pretend to glory in any thing before God; no, not Abraham, as great and as good a man as he was; and therefore he fetches an argument from it: It would be absurd for him that *glorieth to glory in any but the Lord*.

2. It is expressly said, that *Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness*. *What faith the scripture?* *ver. 3.* In all controversies in religion this must be our question, *What faith the scripture?* It is not what this great man, and the other good man faith, but, *What faith the scripture?* Ask counsel at this *Abel*, and so end the matter, 2 Sam. xx. 18. To the law, and to the testimony, Isa. viii. 20. *thither is the last appeal*.

Now the scripture faith, that *Abraham believed, and that was counted to him for righteousness*, *Gen. xv. 6.* therefore he had not whereof to glory before God, it being purely of free grace that it was so imputed, and having not in itself any thing of the formal nature of a righteousness, further than as God himself was graciously pleased so to count it to him. It is mentioned in *Genesis*, upon occasion of a very signal and remarkable act of faith concerning the promised seed; and the more observable, in that it followed upon a grievous conflict he had had with unbelief; his faith was now a victorious faith, newly returned from the battle. It is not the perfect faith that is required to justification; there may be acceptable faith, where there are remainders of unbelief; but the prevailing faith, the faith that has the upper-hand of unbelief.

3. If he were justified by works, the reward would have been of debt, and not of grace; which is not to be imagined. This is his argument, *ver. 4, 5.* *Abraham's reward was God himself*; so he had told him but just before, *Gen. xv. 1.* *I am thy exceeding great reward*. Now, if Abraham had merited this by the perfection of his obedience, it had not been an act of grace in God, but Abraham might have demanded it with as much confidence, as ever any labourer in the vineyard demanded the penny he had earned. But this cannot be; it is impossible for man, much more guilty man, to make God a debtor to him, *Rom. xi. 35.* No, God will have free grace to have all the glory, grace for grace's sake, *John i. 16.* And therefore, to him that worketh not, i. e. that can pretend to no such merit, nor shew any worth or value in his work which may answer such a reward, but, disclaiming any such pretension, casts himself wholly upon the free grace of God, in Christ, by a lively, active, obedient faith; to such a one faith is counted for righteousness, i. e. is accepted of God as the qualification required in all those that shall be pardoned and saved.

Him that justifieth the ungodly, i. e. them that were before ungodly: Their former ungodliness was no bar to their justification upon their believing: *τοῦ ἀσεβῆ, that ungodly one*, viz. Abraham, who, before his conversion, it should seem, was carried down the stream of the Chaldean idolatry, *Jos. xxiv. 2.* No room therefore

therefore is left for despair; though God clears not the impenitently guilty, yet, through Christ, *he justifies the ungodly*.

4. He further illustrates this, by a passage out of *the Psalms*, where David speaks of the remission of sins, the prime branch of justification, as constituting the happiness and blessedness of a man; pronouncing him blessed, not that has no sin, or none which deserveth death, for then, while man is so sinful, and God so righteous, where would be the blessed man? *but the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin*; who, though he cannot plead, not guilty, pleads the act of indemnity, and his plea is allowed. It is quoted from *Psalms xxxii. 1, 2.* where observe,

(1.) The nature of forgiveness: It is the remission of a debt, or a crime; it is *the covering of sin*, as a filthy thing, as the nakedness and shame of the soul: God is said to *cast sin behind his back, to hide his face from it*; which, and the like expressions, imply, that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered) justification doth not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but God's not laying it to our charge; as it follows here; it is God's *not imputing of sin*, ver. 8. which makes it wholly a gracious act of God, not dealing with us in strict justice, as we have deserved; *not entering into judgment; not marking iniquities*: All which, being purely acts of grace, the acceptance and the reward cannot be expected as due debts: And therefore Paul infers, ver. 6. *that it is the imputing of righteousness without works*.

(2.) The blessedness of it: *Blessed are they*. When it is said, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked*, and many the like, the design is to shew the characters of those that are blessed; but when it is said, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven*, the design is to shew what that blessedness is, and what is the ground and foundation of it. Pardoned people are the only blessed people. The sentiments of the world are, those are happy that have a clear estate, and are out of debt to man; but the sentence of the word is, that those are happy that have their debts to God discharged. O, how much therefore is it our interest to make it sure to ourselves, that our sins are pardoned! for that is the foundation of all other benefits: So and so I will do for them; for I will be merciful, *Heb. viii. 12.*

9. *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?* For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being yet uncircumcised. 13. For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. 15. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is no transgression*. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations)

St. Paul observes in this paragraph, when and why Abraham was thus justified; for he hath several things to remark upon that: It was before he was circumcised, and before the giving of the law; and there was a reason for both.

1. It was before he was circumcised, ver. 10. *His faith was counted to him for righteousness, while he was in uncircumcision*. It was imputed, Gen. xv. 6. and he was not circumcised till chap. xvii. Abraham is expressly said to be justified by faith fourteen years, some say, twenty five years, before he was circumcised. Now this the apostle takes notice of, in answer to the question, ver. 9. *Cometh this blessedness then on the circumcision only, or on the uncircumcision also?* Abraham was pardoned and accepted in uncircumcision; a note which, as it might silence the fears of the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, so it might lower the pride and conceit-

edness of the Jews, who gloried in their circumcision, as if they had the monopoly of all happiness.

Here are two reasons why Abraham was justified by faith in uncircumcision.

1. *That circumcision might be a seal of the righteousness of faith*, ver. 11. The tenor of the covenants must first be settled, before the seal can be annexed: Sealing supposeth a bargain precedent, which is confirmed and ratified by that ceremony. After Abraham's justification by faith had continued several years only a grant by parole, for the confirmation of Abraham's faith, God was pleased to appoint a sealing ordinance; and Abraham received it; though it were a bloody ordinance, yet he submitted to it, and even received it as a special favour, *the sign of, &c.* Now we may from hence observe,

First, The nature of sacraments in general; they are signs, and seals; signs, to represent and instruct; seals, to ratify and confirm: They are signs of absolute grace and favour; they are seals of the conditional promises: Nay, they are mutual seals; God doth in the sacraments seal to us to be to us a God, and we do there-in seal to him to be to him a people.

Secondly, The nature of circumcision in particular; it was the initiating sacrament of the Old Testament; and it is here said to be,

(1.) *A sign; a sign* of that original corruption which we are all born with, and which is cut off by spiritual circumcision, a commemorating sign of God's covenant with Abraham; a distinguishing sign between Jews and Gentiles; a sign of admission into the visible church; a sign prefiguring baptism, which comes in the room of circumcision, now under the gospel, when (the blood of Christ being shed) all bloody ordinances are abolished; it was an outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual grace signified thereby.

(2.) *A seal of the righteousness of the faith*: In general, it was a seal of the covenant of grace, particularly of justification by faith; the covenant of grace, called the righteousness which is of faith, Rom. x. 6. and it refers to an Old Testament promise, Deut. xxx. 12.

Now if infants were then capable of receiving a seal of the covenant of grace, which proves that they then were within the verge of that covenant, how they come to be now cast out of the covenant, and incapable of the seal, and by what severe sentence they were thus rejected and incapacitated, those are concerned to make out, that not only reject, but nullify and reproach the baptism of the seed of believers.

2. *That he might be the father of all them that believe*: Not but that there were those that were justified by faith before Abraham; but of Abraham first it is particularly observed, and in him commenced a much clearer and fuller dispensation of the covenant of grace, than any had been before extant; and therefore he is called the father of all that believe, because he was so eminent a believer, and so eminently justified by faith; as Jabel was the father of shepherds, and Jubal of musicians, Gen. iv. 20, 21. The father of all them that believe, i. e. a standing pattern of faith; as parents are examples to their children; and a standing precedent of justification by faith; as the liberties, privileges, honours, and estates of the fathers descend to their children: Abraham was the father of believers, because to him particularly the magna charta was renewed.

(1.) *The father of believing Gentiles, though they be not circumcised*: Zaccheus, a publican, if he believe, is reckoned a son of Abraham, Luke xix. 9. Abraham being himself uncircumcised when he was justified by faith, uncircumcision can never be a bar. Thus were the doubts and fears of the poor Gentiles anticipated, and no room left to question, but that righteousness might be imputed to them also, Col. iii. 11. Gal. v. 6.

(2.) *The father of believing Jews, not meerly as circumcised, and of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but because believers, because they are not of the circumcision only, i. e. are not only circumcised, but walk in the steps of that faith*; have not only the sign, but the thing signified; not only are of Abraham's family, but follow the example of Abraham's faith. See here who are the genuine children and lawful successors of those that were the church's fathers! not those that sit in their chairs, and bear their names, but those that tread in their steps; this is the line of succession, which holds notwithstanding interruptions. It seems then, those were most loud and forward to call Abraham father, that had least title to the honours and privileges of his children. Thus they have most reason to call Christ Father, not that bear his name in being Christians in profession, but tread in his steps.

2. It was before the giving of the law, ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. The former observation was levelled against those that confined justification to the circumcision, this, to those that expected it by the law; now the promise was made to Abraham long before the law: Compare Gal. iii. 17, 18. Now observe,

(1.) What that promise was, that he should be the heir of the world, i. e. of the land of Canaan, the choicest spot of ground in the world; or the father of many nations of the world, who sprung from him, besides the Israelites; or, the heir of the comforts of the life which now is: The meek are said to inherit the earth, and

and the world is theirs : Though Abraham had so little of the world in possession, yet he was heir of it all. Or rather, it points at Christ, the seed here mentioned ; compare *Gal. iii. 16. To thy seed, which is Christ.* Now Christ is the heir of the world, the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was so : And it refers to that promise, *Gen. xii. 3. In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

(2.) How it was made to him, *not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith ; not through the law*, for that was not yet given ; but it was upon that believing which was counted to him for righteousness ; it was upon his trusting God in his leaving his own country when God bid him, *Heb. xi. 8.*

Now being by faith, it could not be by the law ; which he proves by the opposition that is betwixt them, *ver. 14, 15. If they which are of the law be heirs, i. e. they, and they only, and they by virtue of the law ; the Jews did, and still do boast, that they are the rightful heirs of the world, because to them the law was given ; but, if so, then faith is made void ; for if it were requisite to an interest in the promise that there should be a perfect performance of the whole law, then the promise can never take its effect, nor is it to any purpose for us to depend upon it, since the way to life by perfect obedience to the law, and spotless, sinless innocency, is wholly blocked up, and the law in itself opens no other way. This he proves, ver. 15. The law worketh wrath ; wrath in us to God ; it irritates and provokes that carnal mind which is enmity to God, as the damming up of a stream makes it swell ; wrath in God against us ; it works this, i. e. it discovers it ; or our breach of the law works it : Now it is certain we can never expect the inheritance by a law that worketh wrath.*

How the law works wrath, he shews very concisely in the latter part of the verse ; *where no law is, there is no transgression* ; an acknowledged maxim, which implies, where there is a law, there is transgression, and that transgression is provoking, and so the law worketh wrath.

(3.) Why the promise was made to him by faith ; for three reasons, *ver. 16.*

First, *That it might be by grace*, i. e. that grace might have the honour of it ; *by grace, and not by the law ; by grace, and not of debt, not of merit*, that grace, grace might be cried to every stone, especially to the top stone in this building. Faith hath particular reference to grace granting, as grace hath reference to faith receiving. *By grace*, and therefore *through faith*, *Eph. ii. 8.* For God will have every crown thrown at the feet of grace, free grace, and every song in heaven sung to that tune, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.*

Secondly, *That the promise might be sure.* The first covenant being a covenant of works, was not sure ; but, through man's failure, the benefits designed by it were cut off ; and therefore, the more effectually to ascertain and ensure the conveyances of the new covenant, there is another way found out, *not by works*, were it so, the promise would not be sure, because of the continual frailty and infirmity of the flesh, *but by faith*, which receives all from Christ, and acts in a continual dependence upon him, as the great trustee of our salvation, and in whose keeping it is safe. The covenant is therefore sure, because it is so well ordered in all things, *2 Sam. xxiii. 3.*

Thirdly, *That it might be sure to all the seed.* If it had been by the law, it had been limited to the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, *Rom. ix. 4.* but therefore it was by faith, that Gentiles as well as Jews might become interested in it ; the spiritual, as well as the natural seed of faithful Abraham : God would contrive the promise in such a way, as might make it most extensive to comprehend all true believers, that circumcision and uncircumcision might break no squares ; and for this, *ver. 17.* he refers us to *Gen. xvii. 5.* where the reason of the change of his name from Abram, a high father, to Abraham, the high father of a multitude, is thus rendered ; *For a father of many nations have I made thee, i. e. all believers, both before and since the coming of Christ in the flesh, should take Abraham for their pattern, and call him father.* The Jews say, that Abraham was the father of all proselytes to the Jewish religion. *Behold he is the father of all the world, which are gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty.* Maimon.

17. — Before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 18. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations : according to that which was spoken, *So shall thy seed be.* 19. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God : 21. And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised,

he was able also to perform. 22. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Having observed when Abraham was justified by faith, and why, for the honour of Abraham, and for example to us who call him father, the apostle here describes and commends the faith of Abraham ; where observe,

1. Whom he believed ; *God who quickeneth.* It is God himself that faith fastens upon ; *other foundation can no man lay.* Now observe what in God Abraham's faith had an eye to, to that for certain which would be most likely to confirm his faith concerning the things promised :

(1.) *God who quickeneth the dead.* It was promised, that he should be the father of many nations, when he and his wife were now as good as dead, *Heb. xi. 11, 12.* and therefore he looks upon God as a God that could breathe life into dry bones : He that quickeneth the dead, can do any thing, can give a child to Abraham when he is old, can bring the Gentiles, who are dead in trespasses and sins, to a divine and spiritual life, *Eph. ii. 1.* Compare *Eph. i. 19, 20.*

(2.) *Who calleth things which be not as though they were, i. e. creates all things by the word of his power*, as in the beginning, *Gen. i. 3.* *2 Cor. iv. 6.* The justification and salvation of sinners, the espousing of the Gentiles that had not been a people, were a gracious calling of things which be not as though they were, giving being to things that were not. This expresseth the sovereignty of God, and his absolute power and dominion ; a mighty stay to faith, when all other props sink and totter !

It is the holy wisdom and policy of faith to fasten particularly on that in God, which is accommodated to the difficulties wherewith it is to wrestle, and will most effectually answer the objections. It is faith indeed to build upon the all-sufficiency of God for the accomplishment of that which is impossible to any thing but that all-sufficiency.

Thus Abraham became the father of many nations, before him whom he believed, i. e. in the eye and account of God ; or, like him whom he believed ; as God was a common Father, so was Abraham. It is by faith in God that we become accepted of him, and conformable to him.

2. How he believed : He doth here greatly magnify the strength of Abraham's faith, in several expressions.

(1.) *Against hope he believed in hope*, *ver. 18.* There was a hope against him, a natural hope ; all the arguments of sense and reason, and experience, which, in such cases, use to beget and support hope, were against him ; no second causes smiled upon him, or, in the least, favoured his hope ; but, against all those inducements to the contrary, he believed ; for he had a hope for him ; he believed in hope, which arose, as his faith did, from the consideration of God's all-sufficiency.

That he might become the father of many nations. Therefore God, by his almighty grace, enabled him thus to believe against hope, that he might pass for a pattern of great and strong faith to all generations. It was fit he, that was to be the father of the faithful, should have something more than ordinary in his faith ; that, in him, faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened. Or, this is mentioned, as the matter of the promise, that he believed ; and he refers to *Gen. xv. 5. So shall thy seed be*, as the stars of heaven, so innumerable, so illustrious. This was that which he believed, when it was counted to him for righteousness, *ver. 6.* And it is observable, that that particular instance of his faith was against hope, against the surmises and suggestions of his unbelief. He had just before been concluding hardly that he should go childless, that one born in his house was his heir, *ver. 2, 3.* and that unbelief was a foil to his faith, and bespeaks it a believing against hope.

(2.) *Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body*, *ver. 19.* Observe, His own body was now dead, i. e. become utterly unlikely to beget a child, though the new life and vigour that God gave him continued after Sarah was dead, witness his children by Keturah. When God intends some special blessing, some child of promise for his people, he commonly puts a sentence of death upon the blessing itself, and upon all the ways that lead to it. Joseph must be enslaved and imprisoned, before he be advanced. But Abraham did not consider this, *ἡ παρρησία*, he did not dwell in his thoughts upon it : He said indeed, *Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old ?* *Gen. xvii. 17.* But that was the language of his admiration, and his desire to be further satisfied, not of his doubting and distrust ; but his faith passed by that consideration, and thought of nothing but the faithfulness of the promise, with the contemplation whereof he was swallowed up, and this kept up his faith : *Being not weak in faith, he considered not.* It is meer weakness of faith that makes a man lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of a promise. Though it may seem to be the wisdom and policy of carnal reason, yet it is the weakness of faith to look into the bottom of all the difficulties that arise against the promise.

(3.) *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief*, *ver. 20.* and he therefore staggered not, because he considered not the frowns and discouragements of second causes ; *ἡ διακρίσις*, he disputed

disputed not; he did not hold any self-consultation about it, did not take time to consider whether he should close with it or no, did not hesitate or stumble at it, but by a resolute and peremptory act of his soul, with a holy boldness ventured all upon the promise: He took it not for a point that would admit of argument or debate, but presently determined it as a ruled case, did not at all hang in suspense about it, he *staggered not through unbelief*. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises: It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger.

4. He was *strong in faith, giving glory to God*, ἐνδυναμωθῆν, he was strengthened in faith, his faith got ground by exercise, *crescit eundo*. Though weak faith shall not be rejected, the bruised reed not broken, the smoking flax not quenched, yet strong faith shall be commended and honoured. The strength of his faith appeared in the victory it won over his fears.

And hereby he *gave glory to God*; for as unbelief dishonours God by making him a liar, 1 John v. 10. so faith honours God, by setting to its seal that he is true, John iii. 33. Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness, resting upon the word that he had spoken. Among men we say, he that trusts another gives him credit, and honours him by taking his word; thus Abraham gave glory to God by trusting him. We never hear our Lord Jesus commending any thing so much as great faith, Mat. viii. 10, and xv. 28. therefore God gives honour to faith, great faith, because faith, great faith, gives honour to God.

5. He was *fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform*, πληροφρονηθεὶς, was carried on with the greatest confidence and assurance; it is a metaphor taken from ships, that came into the harbour with full sail. Abraham saw the storms of doubts and fears and temptations likely to rise against the promise, upon which many a one would have shrunk back, and lain by for fairer days, and waited a smiling gale of sense and reason: But Abraham having taken God for his pilot, and the promise for his card and compass, resolves to weather his point, and like a bold adventurer sets up all his sails, breaks through all the difficulties, regards neither winds nor clouds, but trusts the strength of his bottom, and the wisdom and faithfulness of his pilot, and bravely makes to the harbour, and comes home an unspeakable gainer. Such was his full persuasion, and it was built on the omnipotence of God, *he was able*. Our waverings rise mainly from our distrust of the divine power; and therefore to fix us, it is requisite we believe not only that he is faithful, but he is able that hath promised.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, ver. 22. Because with such a confidence he ventured his all in the divine promise, God graciously accepted him; and not only answered, but outdid his expectation. This way of glorifying God by a firm reliance on his bare promise was so very agreeable to God's design, and so very conducive to his honour, that he graciously accepted it as a righteousness, and justified him, though there was not that in the thing itself which could merit such an acceptance. This shews why faith is chosen to be the prime condition of our justification, because it is a grace that of all other gives glory to God.

23. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: 24. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

In the close of the chapter he applies all to us; and having abundantly proved that Abraham was justified by faith, he here concludes that his justification was to be the pattern or samplar of ours.

It was not written for his sake alone. It was not intended only for an historical commendation of Abraham, or a relation of something peculiar to him, (as some antipædobaptists will needs understand that circumcision was a *seal of the righteousness of the faith*, ver. 11. only to Abraham himself and no other :) No, the scripture did not intend hereby to describe some singular way of justification that belonged to Abraham as his prerogative. The accounts we have of the Old Testament saints were not intended for histories only, barely to inform and divert us, but for precedents to direct us, for ensamples, 1 Cor. x. 11. for our learning, Rom. xv. 4. And this particularly concerning Abraham was written for us also, to assure us what that righteousness is which God requireth and accepteth to our salvation; for us also, that are mean and vile, that come so far short of Abraham in privileges and performances; us Gentiles as well as the Jews, for the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles through Christ; for us, on whom the ends of the world are come, as well as for the patriarchs; for the grace of God is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

His application of it is but short: Only we may observe, 1. Our common privilege; it shall be imputed to us, viz. righteousness shall; the gospel way of justification is by an imputed righteousness,

μελλεν λογίζεσθαι, it shall be imputed; he uses a future verb, to signify the continuation of his mercy in the church, that as it is the same now, so it will be while God has a church in the world, and there are any of the children of men to be justified; for there is a *fountain opened* that is inexhaustible.

2. Our common duty, the condition of this privilege, and that is believing. The proper object of this believing is a divine revelation: the revelation to Abraham was concerning a Christ to come, the revelation to us is concerning a Christ already come, which difference in the revelation doth not alter the case.

Abraham believed the power of God in raising up an Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah; we are to believe the same power exerted in a higher instance, viz. the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Isaac was in a figure, Heb. xi. 19. the resurrection of Christ was real. Now we are to believe on him that raised up Christ; not only believe his power that he could do it, but depend upon his grace in raising up Christ as our surety; so he explains it, ver. 25. where we have a brief account of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, which are the two main hinges, on which the door of salvation turns.

1. He was *delivered for our offences*. God the father delivered him, he delivered up himself as a sacrifice for sin; he died indeed as a malefactor, because he died for sin; but it was not his own sins, but the sins of the people; he died to make atonement for our sins, to expiate our guilt, to satisfy divine justice.

2. He was *raised again for our justification*, i. e. for the perfecting and compleating of our justification. By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took our out acquittance; when he was buried, he lay a prisoner in execution for our debt, which as a surety he had undertaken to pay; on the third day an angel was sent to roll away the stone, and so to discharge the prisoner, which was the greatest assurance possible, that divine justice was satisfied, the debt paid, or else he would never have released the prisoner: And therefore the apostle puts a special emphasis on Christ's resurrection; it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, Rom. viii. 34.

So that upon the whole matter it is very evident, that we are not justified by the merit of our own works, but by a fiducial, obediencial dependence upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness, as the condition on our part of our right to impunity and salvation; which was the truth that Paul in this and the foregoing chapter had been fixing as the great spring and foundation of all our comfort.

CHAP. V.

The apostle having made his point, and fully proved justification by faith, doth in this chapter proceed in the explication, illustration, and application of that truth. (1.) He shews the fruits of justification, ver. 1,—5. (2.) He shews the fountain and foundation of justification, in the death of Jesus Christ, which he discourseth of at large in the rest of the chapter.

1. **T**herefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience: 3. And patience, experience: and experience, hope: 5. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The precious benefits and privileges which flow from justification are such, as should quicken us all to give diligence to make it sure to ourselves that we are justified, and then to take the comfort it tenders to us, and to the duty it calls for from us. The fruits of this tree of life are exceeding precious.

1. *We have peace with God*, ver. 1. It is sin that breeds the quarrel between us and God, creates not only a strangeness but an enmity; the holy, righteous God cannot in honour be at peace with a sinner; while he continues under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. And such is the benignity and good will of God to man, that immediately upon the removing of that obstacle the peace is made. By faith we lay hold on God's arm, and on his strength, and so are at peace, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. There is more in this peace than barely a cessation of enmity, there is friendship and loving kindness, for God is either the worst enemy or the best friend.

Abraham being justified by faith was called the *friend of God*. Jam. ii. 23. which was his honour, but not his peculiar honour; Christ has called his disciples friends, John xv. 13, 14, 15. And sure, a man needs no more to make him happy than to have God his friend!

But this is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*; through him as the great Peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man, that blessed day's-man that has laid his hand upon us both. Adam, in innocency, had peace with God immediately; there needed no such mediator; but to guilty, sinful man, it is a very dreadful thing to think of God out of Christ; *for he is our peace*, Eph. ii. 14. not only the maker, but the matter and maintainer of our peace, Col. i. 20.

2. *We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*, ver. 2. This is a further privilege, not only *peace*, but *grace*, this *grace*, i. e. this favour. Observe,

(1.) The saints happy state, it is a state of *grace*, God's loving-kindness to us, and our conformity to God; he that hath God's love, and God's kindness, is in a state of grace: Now *into this grace we have access*, *προσπαγγὴν*, an introduction; which implies, that we were not born in this state; we are *by nature children of wrath*, and the carnal mind is enmity against God; but we are brought into it: We could not have got into it of ourselves, nor have conquered the difficulties in the way, but we have a manuduction, a leading by the hand; are led into it, as blind, or lame, or weak people are led; are introduced, as pardoned offenders; are introduced by some favourite at court, to kiss the king's hand, as strangers, that are to have audience, are conducted.

προσπαγγὴν ἐχόμενοι, *we have had access*: He speaks of those that are already brought out of a state of nature, into a state of grace. Paul, in his conversion, had this access; then he was made nigh: Barnabas introduced him to the apostles, Acts ix. 27. and there were others that led him by the hand to Damascus, ver. 8. but it was Christ that introduced and led him by the hand into this grace.

By whom we have access by faith; by Christ, as the author and principal agent; by faith, as the means of this access: Not by Christ, in consideration of any merit or desert of ours; but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him, and resignation of ourselves to him.

(2.) Their happy standing in this state; *wherein we stand*: Not only wherein we are, but *wherein we stand*: A posture that notes our discharge from guilt; *we stand in the judgment*, Psalm i. 5. not cast as convicted criminals, but our dignity and honour secured; not thrown to the ground as abjects: Our progress; while we stand, we are going; we must not lie down as if *we had already attained*, but stand as those that are pressing forwards, stand as servants attending on Christ our Master: Our perseverance; we stand firm and safe, upheld by the power of God; stand as soldiers stand, that keep their ground, not borne down by the power of the enemy. It notes not only our admission to, but our confirmation in the favour of God. It is not in the court of heaven as in earthly courts, where high places are slippery places; but we stand in a humble confidence of this very thing, *that he which has begun the good work, will perform it*, Phil. i. 6.

3. *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. Besides the happiness in hand, there is a happiness in hope, *the glory of God*, i. e. the glory which God will put upon the saints in heaven; glory which will consist in the vision and fruition of God.

(1.) Those, and those only, *that have access, by faith, into the grace of God now*, may hope for *the glory of God* hereafter: There is no good hope of glory, but what is founded in grace; grace is glory begun, the earnest and assurance of glory: He will give grace and glory, Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

(2.) Those who hope for *the glory of God* hereafter, have enough to rejoice in now. It is the duty of those that hope for heaven, to rejoice in those hopes.

4. *We glory in tribulations also*; not only notwithstanding our tribulations, those do not hinder our rejoicing in hope of *the glory of God*, but even in our tribulations, as those are *working for us the weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Observe, What a growing, increasing happiness the happiness of the saints is; *not only so*: One would think, such peace, such grace, such glory, and such a joy in hope of it, were more than such poor, undeserving creatures as we are, could pretend to; and yet it is *not only so*, there are more instances of our happiness; *we glory in tribulations also*; especially *tribulations for righteousness sake*; which seemed the greatest objection against the saints happiness; whereas really their happiness did not only consist with, but take rise from those tribulations: *They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer*, Acts v. 41.

This being the hardest point, he sets himself to shew the grounds and reasons of it. How come we to *glory in tribulations*? Why, because tribulations, by a chain of causes, greatly befriend hope; which he shews in the method of its influence.

1. *Tribulation worketh patience*, not in, and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation: It proves, and, by proving, improves patience; as parts and gifts increase by exercise: It is not the efficient cause, but yields the occasion, as steel is hardened by the fire. See how God *brings meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong*! That which *worketh patience* is matter of joy; for *patience* doth us more good, than *tribulation* can do us hurt: *Tribulation*, in itself, *work-*

eth impatience; but, as it is sanctified to the saints, it *worketh patience*.

2. *Patience, experience*, ver. 4. It works an *experience* of God, and the songs he gives in the night; the patient sufferers have the greatest *experience* of the divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works an *experience* of ourselves: It is by *tribulation* that we make an experiment of our own sincerity, and therefore such *tribulations* are called trials. It works, *δοκιμὴν*, an approbation, as he is approved that has passed the test. Thus Job's *tribulation wrought patience*, and that *patience* produced an approbation, that *still he holds fast his integrity*, Job ii. 3.

3. *Experience, hope*. He that, being thus tried, comes forth as gold, will thereby be encouraged to hope. This experiment, or approbation, is not so much the ground, as the evidence of our hope, and a special friend to it. *Experience* of God is a prop to our hope; he that hath delivered, doth, and will. *Experience* of ourselves helps to evidence our sincerity.

4. This *hope maketh not ashamed*, i. e. it is a hope that will not deceive us: Nothing confounds more than disappointment: *Everlasting shame and confusion will be caused by the perishing of the expectation*, but the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, Prov. x. 28. See Psalm xxii. 5. lxxi. 1. Or, it *maketh not ashamed* of our sufferings. Though we are counted as the off-scouring of all things, and trodden under foot as the mire in the streets; yet, having hopes of glory, we are *not ashamed* of these sufferings: It is in a good cause, for a good Master, and in good hope; and therefore we are *not ashamed*: We will never think ourselves disparaged by sufferings that are likely to end so well.

Because the love of God is shed abroad. This hope will not disappoint us, because it is sealed with the holy Spirit as a spirit of love. It is the gracious work of the blessed Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all the saints. The love of God, i. e. the sense of God's love to us, drawing out love in us to him again. Or, the great effects of his love: 1. Special grace; and, 2. The pleasant gust or sense of it: *It is shed abroad*, as sweet ointment, perfuming the soul; as rain watering it, and making it fruitful: The ground of all our comfort and holiness, and perseverance in both, is laid in the *shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts*; it is that which doth constrain us, 2 Cor. v. 14. Thus are we drawn and held by the bonds of love. Sense of God's love to us, will make us *not ashamed*, either of our hope in him, or our sufferings for him.

6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet per-

adventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9. Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. 12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. 13. For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adams transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come: 15. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17. For if by one mans offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. 18. Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19. For as by one mans disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many

many be made righteous. 20. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound : but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound : 21. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The apostle here describes the fountain and foundation of justification laid in the death of the Lord Jesus : The streams are very sweet, but, if you run them up to the spring-head, you will find it to be Christ's dying for us ; it is in the precious stream of Christ's blood that all these privileges come flowing to us ; and therefore he enlargeth upon the instance of that *love of God which is shed abroad*.

Three things he takes notice of, for the explication and illustration of this doctrine.

1. The persons he died for, *ver. 6, 7, 8.*

2. The precious fruits of his death, *ver. 9, 10, 11.*

3. The parallel he runs between the communication of sin and death by the first Adam, and of righteousness and life by the second Adam, *ver. 12. ad finem.*

1. The character we were under when Christ died for us :

(1.) *We were without strength*, *ver. 6.* in a sad condition ; and, which is worse, altogether unable to help ourselves out of that condition ; lost, and no visible way open for our recovery ; our condition deplorable, and, in a manner, desperate ; and therefore our salvation is here said to come in *due time* : God's time to help and save is when those that are to be saved *are without strength*, that his own power and grace may be the more magnified, *Deut. xxxii. 36.* God uses to help at a dead lift.

(2.) *He died for the ungodly* : Not only helpless creatures, and therefore likely to perish ; but guilty, sinful creatures, and therefore deserving to perish ; not only mean and worthless, but vile and obnoxious ; unworthy of such favour with the holy God : Being *ungodly*, they had need of one to die for them, to satisfy for guilt, and to bring in a righteousness. This he illustrates, *ver. 7, 8.* as an unparalleled instance of love ; herein *God's thoughts and ways were above ours* : Compare *John xv. 13, 14.* *Greater love has no man.*

1. One would hardly die for a righteous man, i. e. an innocent man, one that is unjustly condemned ; every body will pity such a one, but few will put such a value upon his life, as either to hazard, or, much less, to deposit their own in his stead.

2. It may be one might, perhaps, be persuaded to die for a good man, i. e. a useful man, that is more than barely a righteous man. Many that are good themselves, yet do but little good to others ; but those that are useful, commonly get themselves well beloved, and meet with some, that, in a case of necessity, would venture to be their ἀντιψυχολοί, would engage life for life, would be their bail, body for body. Paul was, in this sense, a very good man, one that was very useful, and he met with some, that, for his life, laid down their own necks, *Rom. xvi. 4.* And yet observe how he qualifies this ; it is but *some* that would do so, and it is a daring act if they do it ; it must be some bold, venturing soul ; and, after all, it is but a peradventure.

3. But Christ died for sinners, *ver. 8.* neither righteous, nor good ; not only such as are useless, but such as were guilty, and obnoxious ; not only such as there would be no loss of, should they perish, but such whose destruction would hugely redound to the glory of God's justice, being malefactors and criminals that ought to die.

Some think, he alludes to a common distinction the Jews had of their people into צדיקים righteous, חסידים merciful, (Compare *Isa. lvii. 1.*) and רשעים wicked.

Now herein God commended his love, not only proved and evidenced his love, he might have done that at a cheaper rate, but he magnified it, and made it illustrious : This circumstance did hugely greatness and advance his love, not only put it past dispute, but rendered it the object of the greatest wonder and admiration ; now my creatures shall see that I love them, I will give them such an instance of it, as shall be without parallel : Commendeth his love, as merchants commend their goods, when they would put them off : This commending of his love was in order to the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the holy Ghost : He evidenceth his love in the most winning, affecting, endearing way imaginable.

While we were yet sinners, implying, that we were not to be always sinners ; there should be a change wrought ; for he died to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins ; but we were yet sinners, when he died for us.

4. Nay, which is more, we were enemies, *ver. 10.* not only malefactors, but traitors, and rebels ; in arms against the government ; the worst kind of malefactors, and, of all other, the most obnoxious. The carnal mind is, not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself, *Rom. viii. 7.* *Col. i. 21.* This enmity is a mutual enmity ; God loathing the sinner, and the sinner loathing God, *Zech. xi. 8.* And that for such as these Christ should die, is such a mystery, such a paradox, such an unprecedented instance of love, that it may well be our business to eternity, to adore and wonder

at it ! This is a commendation of love indeed ! Justly might he, who had thus loved us, make it one of the laws of his kingdom, that we should love our enemies.

2. The precious fruits of his death :

(1.) Justification and reconciliation is the first and primary fruit of the death of Christ : *We are justified by his blood*, *ver. 9.* *reconciled by his death*, *ver. 10.* Sin is pardoned, the sinner accepted as righteous, the quarrel taken up, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. This is done, i. e. Christ has done all that was requisite on his part to be done in order hereunto, and immediately upon our believing, we are actually put into a state of justification and reconciliation.

Justified by his blood. Our justification is ascribed to the blood of Christ, because without blood there is no remission, *Heb. ix. 22.* The blood is the life, and that must go to make atonement. In all the propitiatory sacrifices, the sprinkling of the blood was of the essence of the sacrifice : It was the blood that made an atonement for the soul, *Lev. xvii. 11.*

(2.) From hence results salvation from wrath ; saved from wrath, *ver. 9.* saved by his life, *ver. 10.* When that which hinders our salvation is taken away, the salvation must needs follow : Nay, the argument holds very strongly, if God justified and reconciled us when we were enemies, and put himself to so much charges to do it, much more will he save us when we are justified and reconciled : He that has done the greater, which is of enemies to make us friends, will certainly do the lesser, which is, when we are friends, to use us friendly, and to be kind to us : And therefore the apostle, once and again, speaks of it with a much more : He that hath digged so deep to lay the foundation, will, no doubt, build upon that foundation.

We shall be saved from wrath, i. e. from hell and damnation : It is the wrath of God that is the fire of hell ; the wrath to come, so it is called, *1 Thess. i. 10.* The final justification and absolution of believers at the great day, together with the fitting and preparing of them for it, is the salvation from wrath here spoken of ; it is the perfecting of the work of grace.

Reconciled by his death, saved by his life. His life here spoken of, is not to be understood of his life in the flesh, but his life in heaven, that life which ensued after his death : Compare *Rom. xiv. 9.* *He was dead, and is alive*, *Rev. i. 18.* We are reconciled by Christ humbled, we are saved by Christ exalted. The dying Jesus laid the foundation in satisfying for sin, and slaying the enmity, and so making us saveable ; thus is the partition-wall broken down, atonement made, and the attainder reversed ; but it is the living Jesus that perfects the work, he lives to make intercession, *Heb. vii. 26.* It is Christ, in his exaltation, that, by his word and Spirit, effectually calls and changes, and reconciles us to God, is our Advocate with the Father, and so compleats and consummates our salvation. Compare *Rom. iv. ult. viii. 34.* Christ dying was the testator who bequeathed us the legacy ; but Christ living is the executor that pays it. Now the arguing is very strong ; he that puts himself to the charge of purchasing our salvation, will not stick at the trouble of applying it.

(3.) All this produceth, as a further privilege, our joy in God, *ver. 11.* God is now so far from being a terror to us, *Jer. xvii. 17.* that he is our joy, and our hope in the day of evil, *Jer. xvii. 17.* We are reconciled, and saved from wrath : Iniquity, blessed be God, shall not be our ruin. And not only so, there is more in it yet, a constant stream of favours ; we not only go to heaven, but go to heaven triumphantly ; not only get into the harbour, but come in with full sail ; we joy in God, not only saved from his wrath, but solacing ourselves in his love, and this through Jesus Christ, who is the alpha and omega, the foundation stone and the top stone, of all our comforts and hopes ; not only our salvation, but our strength, and our song ; and all this (which he repeats as a string he loved to be harping upon) by virtue of the atonement ; for by him we Christians, we believers, have now, now, in gospel times, or, now, in this life, received the atonement, which was typified by the sacrifices under the law, and is an earnest of our happiness in heaven. True believers do by Jesus Christ receive the atonement. Receiving the atonement is our actual reconciliation to God in justification, grounded upon Christ's satisfaction.

To receive the atonement is,

(1.) To give our consent to the atonement, approving of, and agreeing to, those methods which infinite wisdom hath taken of saving a guilty world by the blood of a crucified Jesus, being willing and glad to be saved in a gospel way, and upon gospel terms.

(2.) To take the comfort of the atonement, which is the fountain and foundation of our joy in God. Now we joy in God, now we do indeed receive the atonement, *καυχώμενοι*, glorying in it. God hath received the atonement, *Matt. iii. 17.* *xvii. 5.* *xxviii. 2.* If we but receive it, the work is done.

3. The parallel that the apostle runs between the communication of sin and death by the first Adam, and of righteousness and life by the second Adam, *ver. 12. ad finem.* which doth not only illustrate the truth he is discoursing of, but tends very much

to the commending of the love of God, and the comforting of the hearts of true believers ; in shewing a correspondence between our fall and our recovery ; and not only a like, but a much greater power in the second Adam to make us happy, than there was in the first to make us miserable.

Now for the opening of this, observe,

1. A general truth laid down as the foundation of his discourse, that Adam was a type of Christ. *Ver. 14. Who is the figure of him that was to come.* Christ is therefore called the *last Adam*, 1 Cor. xv. 45. comp. *ver. 22.* In this, Adam was a type of Christ, that in the covenant transactions that were between God and him, and in the consequent events of those transactions, Adam was a publick person ; God dealt with Adam, and Adam acted as such a one, as a common father, and factor, root and representative of and for all his posterity ; so that what he did in that station, as agent for us, we may be said to have done in him ; and what was done to him, may be said to have been done to us in him. Thus Jesus Christ, the mediator, acted as a publick person, the head of all the elect, dealt with God for them, as their father, factor, root and representative ; died for them, rose for them, entered within the veil for them, did all for them. When Adam failed, we failed with him ; when Christ performed, he performed for us. Thus was *Adam τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος*, the figure of him that was to come, to come to repair that breach which Adam had made.

2. A more particular explication of the parallel. In which observe,

First, How Adam, as a publick person, communicated sin and death to all his posterity. *Ver. 12. By one man sin entered.* We see the world under a deluge of sin and death, full of iniquities, and full of calamities. Now, it is worth while to enquire what is the spring that feeds it, and you will find that to be the general corruption of nature ; and at what gap it entered, and you will find that to have been Adam's first sin. It was *by one man*, and he the first man ; for if any had been before him, they would have been free ; that one man from whom, as from the root, we all spring.

1. By him *sin entered.* When God pronounced all very good, *Gen. i. ult.* there was no sin in the world ; it was when Adam eat forbidden fruit, that sin made its entry. Sin had before entered into the world of angels, when many of them revolted from their allegiance, and left their first estate ; but it never entered into the world of mankind till Adam sinned ; entered as an enemy to kill and destroy ; as a thief, to rob and despoil ; and a dismal entry it was. Then entered the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to posterity, and a general corruption and depravedness of nature.

Ἐφ' ᾧ, for that, so we read it ; rather, *in whom all have sinned.* Sin entered into the world by Adam, for in him we all sinned : As, 1 Cor. xv. 22. *in Adam all die* ; so here, in him all have sinned : for it is agreeable to the law of all nations, that the acts of a publick person are accounted theirs whom they represent ; and what a whole body doth, every member of the same body may be said to do. Now Adam acted thus as a publick person, by the sovereign ordination and appointment of God, and yet that founded upon a natural necessity ; for God, as the author of nature, had made this the law of nature, that man should beget in his own likeness, and so the other creatures. In Adam therefore, as in a common receptacle, the whole nature of man was repositied, from him to flow down in a chanel to his posterity ; for all mankind is made *of one blood*, *Act. xvii. 26.* so that according as this nature proves through his standing or falling, before he puts it out of his hands, accordingly it is propagated from him : Adam therefore sinning and falling, the nature became guilty and corrupted, and is so derived. Thus in him *all have sinned.*

2. *Death by sin* : for death is the wages of sin : Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. When sin came, to be sure death came along with it. Death is here put for all that misery which is the due desert of sin, temporal, spiritual, eternal death. If Adam had not sinned, he had not died : the threatening was, *in the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die*, *Gen. ii. 17.*

So death passed, i. e. a sentence of death was passed, as upon a criminal, *διήλθεν, passed through* all men, as an infectious disease passeth through a town, so that none escape it. It is the universal fate, without exception, death passeth upon all. There are common calamities incident to human life, which do abundantly prove this.

Death reigned, *ver. 14.* He speaks of death as a mighty prince, and his monarchy the most absolute, universal, and lasting monarchy. None are exempted from its sceptre ; it is a monarchy that will survive all other earthly rule, authority, and power, for it is the last enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 26. Those sons of Belial that will be subject to no other rule, yet cannot avoid being subject to this.

Now all this we may thank Adam for ; from him this sin and death descends. Well may we say, as that good man, observing the change that a fit of sickness had made in his countenance, *O Adam ! what hast thou done ?*

Further, to clear this, he shews, that sin did not commence with the law of Moses, but was *in the world until*, or before that law ; therefore that law of Moses is not the only rule of life ; for there was a rule, and that rule transgressed, before the law was given. It likewise intimates, that we cannot be justified by our obedience to the law of Moses, any more than we were condemned by and for our disobedience to it. Sin was in the world before the law ; witness Cain's murder, the apostasy of the old world, the wickedness of Sodom.

1. His inference from hence is, therefore there was a law : for *sin is not imputed where there is no law.* Original sin is a *want of conformity to*, and actual sin is a *transgression of* the law of God : therefore all were under some law.

2. His proof of it is, that *death reigned from Adam to Moses*, *ver. 14.* It is certain, death could not have reigned, if sin had not set up the throne for him. This proves, that sin was in the world before the law ; and original sin, for death reigned over those that had not sinned any actual sin, that *had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, never sinned in their own persons, as Adam did ; which is to be understood of infants, that were never guilty of actual sin, and yet died, because Adam's sin was imputed to them.

This reign of death seems especially to refer to those violent and extraordinary judgments, which were long before Moses, as the deluge, and the destruction of Sodom, which involved infants. It is a great proof of original sin, that little children, who were never guilty of any actual transgression, yet are liable to very terrible diseases, casualties, and deaths ; which could by no means be reconciled with the justice and righteousness of God, if they were not chargeable with guilt.

Secondly, How, in correspondence to this, Christ, as a publick person, communicates righteousness and life to all true believers, that are his spiritual seed : And in this he shews not only wherein the resemblance holds, but *ex abundanti*, wherein the communication of grace and love by Christ goes beyond the communication of guilt and wrath by Adam.

1. Wherein the resemblance holds ; that is laid down most fully, *ver. 18, 19.*

1. *By the offence and disobedience of one, many were made sinners, and judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* Where observe.

First, That Adam's sin was disobedience ; disobedience to a plain and express command ; and it was a command of trial : The thing he did was therefore evil, because it was forbidden, and not otherwise ; but that opened the door to other sins, though itself seemingly small.

Secondly, That the malignity and poison of sin is very strong and spreading, else the guilt of Adam's sin would not have reached so far, nor have been so deep and long a stream. Who would think there should be so much evil in sin ?

Thirdly, That by Adam's sin many are made sinners : *Many*, i. e. all his posterity ; said to be many in opposition to the one that offended. Made sinners, *κατασκευασαν* : It notes the making of us such by a judicial act : we were cast as sinners by due course of law.

Fourthly, That judgment is come to condemnation upon all those that by Adam's disobedience were *made sinners*. Being convicted, we are condemned. All the race of mankind lie under a sentence, like an attainder upon a family. There is judgment given and recorded against us in the court of heaven ; and if the judgment be not reversed, we are likely to sink under it to eternity.

2. In like manner, *by the righteousness and obedience of one*, and that one is Jesus Christ, the second Adam, *are many made righteous*, and so the *free gift comes upon all*. It is observable, how the apostle inculcates this truth, and repeats again and again, as a truth of very great consequence. Here observe,

First, The nature of Christ's righteousness, how it is brought in ; it is by his obedience. The disobedience of the first Adam ruined us, the obedience of the second Adam saves us ; his obedience to the law of mediation, which was, that he should fulfil all righteousness, and then make his soul an offering for sin. By his obedience to this law he wrought out a righteousness for us, satisfied God's justice, and so made way for us into his favour.

Secondly, The fruit of it.

1. There is a *free gift come upon all men*, i. e. it is made and offered promiscuously to all. The salvation wrought is a *common salvation* ; the proposals are general, the tender free ; whoever will, may come and take of these waters of life.

This free gift is to all believers upon their believing *unto justification of life*. It is not only a justification that frees from death, but that entitles to life.

2. *Many shall be made righteous* ; many compared with one ; or as many as belong to the election of grace ; which though but a few as they are scattered up and down in the world, yet will be a great many when they come all together. *Κατασκευαζονται*, they shall be constituted righteous, as by letters patents. Now the antithesis betwixt these two, our ruin by Adam, and our recovery by Christ, is obvious enough.

2. Wherein

2. Wherein the communication of grace and love by Christ goes beyond the communication of guilt and wrath by Adam ; and this he shews, *ver.* 15, 16, 17. And it is designed for the magnifying of the riches of Christ's love, and for the comfort and encouragement of believers, who considering what a wound Adam's sin has made, might begin to despair of a proportionable remedy.

His expressions are a little intricate, but this he seems to intend.

1. If guilt and wrath be communicated, much more shall grace and love ; for it is agreeable to the idea we have of the divine goodness to suppose, that he should be more ready to save upon an imputed righteousness, than to condemn upon an imputed guilt. Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace. God's goodness is, of all his attributes, in a special manner, his glory, and it is that grace that is the root, his favour to us in Christ, and the gift is by grace. We know that God is rather inclined to shew mercy ; punishing is his strange work.

2. If there were so much power and efficacy, as it seems there was, in the sin of a man, who was of the earth, earthy, to condemn us ; much more is there power and efficacy in the righteousness and grace of Christ, who is the Lord from heaven, to justify and save us. The one man that saves us, is Jesus Christ. Surely Adam could not propagate so strong a poison, but Jesus Christ could propagate as strong an antidote, and much stronger.

3. It is but the guilt of one single offence of Adam's that is laid to our charge ; the judgment was *ἕκαστος ἐπὶ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἥμαρτον*, by one, i. e. by one offence, *ver.* 16, 17. *Margin.* But from Jesus Christ we receive and derive an abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. The stream of grace and righteousness is deeper and broader than the stream of guilt ; for this righteousness doth not only take away the guilt of that one offence, but of many other offences, even of all : God in Christ forgives all trespasses, *Col.* ii. 13.

4. By Adam's Sin death reigned ; but by Christ's righteousness there is not only a period put to the reign of death, but believers are preferred to reign in life, *ver.* 17. In and by the righteousness of Christ, we have not only a charter of pardon, but a patent of honour ; are not only freed from our chains, but, like Joseph, advanced to the second chariot, and made unto our God, kings and priests ; not only pardoned, but preferred. See this observed, *Rev.* i. 5, 6. v. 9, 10. We are by Christ and his righteousness intitled to, and instated in more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The plaster is wider than the wound, and more healing than the wound is killing.

Lastly, In the two last verses he seems to anticipate an objection which is expressed *Gal.* iii. 19. *Wherefore then serveth the law ?* Answer,

1. The law entered, that the offence might abound. Not to make sin to abound the more in itself, otherwise than as sin takes occasion by the commandment ; but to discover the abounding sinfulness of it. The glass discovers the spots, but doth not cause them. When the commandment came into the world, sin revived ; as the letting in of a clearer light into a room discovers that dust and filth which was there before, but was not seen. It was like the searching of a wound, which is necessary to the cure. The offence, *τὸ ἁμαρτία*, that offence, the sin of Adam, the extending of the guilt of it to us, and the effect of the corruption in us, is the abounding of that offence, which appeared upon the entry of the law.

2. That grace might much more abound ; that the terrors of the law might make gospel comforts so much the sweeter. Sin abounded among the Jews ; and to those of them that were converted to the faith of Christ, did not grace much more abound in the remitting of so much guilt, and the subduing of so much corruption ? The greater the strength of the enemy, the greater the honour of the conqueror.

This abounding of grace he illustrates, *ver.* 21. As the reign of a tyrant and oppressor is a foil to set off the succeeding reign of a just and gentle prince, and to make it the more illustrious ; so doth the reign of sin set off the reign of grace. Sin reigned unto death, it was a cruel, bloody reign ; but grace reigns to life, eternal life, and this through righteousness, righteousness imputed to us for justification, implanted in us for sanctification ; and both by Jesus Christ our Lord, through the power and efficacy of Christ the great prophet, priest, and king of his church.

C H A P. VI.

The apostle having at large asserted, opened, and proved the great doctrine of justification by faith, for fear lest any should suck poison out of that sweet flower, and turn that grace of God into wantonness and licentiousness, he doth with a like zeal, copiousness of expression, and cogency of argument, press the absolute necessity of sanctification and a holy life, as the inseparable fruit and companion of justification ; for wherever Jesus Christ is made of God unto any soul righteousness, he is made of God unto that soul sanctification, *1 Cor.* i. 30. The water and the blood came streaming

together out of the pierced side of the dying Jesus : And what God hath thus joined together, let not us dare to put asunder.

1. **W**HAT shall we say then ? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? 2. God forbid : how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ? 3. Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death ? 4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death : we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection : 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7. For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him : 9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him. 10. For in that he died, he died unto sin once : but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11. Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead indeed unto sin ; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin : but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead ; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15. What then ? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace ? God forbid. 16. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ? 17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. 19. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh : for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness. 20. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21. What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death. 22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23. For the wages of sin is death : but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The apostle's transition, which joins this discourse with the former, is observable. *What shall we say then ?* *ver.* 1. what use shall we make of this sweet and comfortable doctrine ? Shall we do evil that good may come ? as some say we do, *chap.* iii. 8. *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ?* Shall we from hence take encouragement to sin with so much the more boldness, because the more sin we commit, the more will the grace of God be magnified in our pardon ? Is this a use to be made of it ? No, it is an abuse ; and the apostle startleth at the thought of it, *ver.* 2. *God forbid ;* far be it from us to think such a thought. He entertains the objections, as Christ did the devil's blackest temptation, *Mat.* iv. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan.* Those opinions that give any countenance to sin, or open a door to practical immoralities, how specious and plausible soever they be rendered, by the pretension of advancing free grace, they are to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence ; for the truth as it is in Jesus, is a truth according to godliness, *Tit.* i. 1.

The apostle is very full in pressing the necessity of holiness, in this chapter, which may be reduced to two heads.

1. His exhortations to holiness, which shew the nature of it.

2. His motives or arguments to enforce those exhortations, which shew the necessity of it.

For the first, We may hence observe the nature of sanctification, what it is, and wherein it doth consist. In general, it has two things in it, mortification, and vivification ; dying to sin, and living to righteousness ; elsewhere expressed by putting off the old man, and putting on the new ; ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well.

First, Mortification, putting off the old man ; several ways that is expressed.

1. We must *live no longer in sin*, ver. 2. i. e. we must not be as we have been, nor do as we have done. The time past of our life must suffice, 1 Pet. iv. 3. Though there is none that lives without sin, yet, blessed be God, there are those that do not *live in sin* ; do not live in it as their element, do not make a trade of it : that is to be sanctified.

2. *The of body sin must be destroyed*, ver. 6. The corruption that dwelleth in us is the *body of sin*, consisting of many parts and members as a body. This is the root to which the ax must be laid. We must not only cease from the acts of sin ; that may be done through the influence of outward restraints, or other inducements ; but we must get the vicious habits and inclinations weakened and destroyed : not only cast away the idols out of the sanctuary, but the *idols of iniquity* out of the heart.

That henceforth we should not serve sin. The actual transgression is certainly in a great measure prevented by the crucifying and killing of the original corruption. Destroy the body of sin, and then, though there should be Canaanites remaining in the land, yet the Israelites will not be slaves to them. It is the body of sin that sways the sceptre, wields the iron rod ; destroy that, and the yoke is broke. The destruction of Eglon the tyrant is the deliverance of oppressed Israel from the Moabites.

3. *We must be dead indeed unto sin*, ver. 11. As the death of the oppressor is a release, so much more is the death of the oppressed, Job iii. 17, 18. Death brings a writ of ease to the weary. Thus must we be dead to sin, obey it, observe it, regard it, fulfil its will no more than he that is dead doth his *quondam* taskmasters ; be as indifferent to the pleasures and delights of sin, as a man that is dying is to his former diversions. He that is dead, is separated from his former company, converse, business, enjoyments, employments, is not what he was, doth not what he did, hath not what he had : Death makes a mighty change ; such a change doth sanctification make in the soul, cuts off all correspondence with sin,

4. *Sin must not reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it*, ver. 12. Though sin may remain as an outlaw, though it may oppress as a tyrant, yet let it not reign as a king. Let it not make laws, nor preside in councils, nor command the militia ; let it not be uppermost in the soul, so as that we should obey it. Though we may be sometimes overtaken and overcome by it, yet let us never be obedient to it, in the lusts thereof ; let not sinful lusts be a law to you, to which you would yield a consenting obedience. *In the lusts thereof*, ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ. It refers to the body, not to sin. Sin lies very much in gratifying of the body, and humouring that. And there is a reason implied in that, your mortal body ; because it is a mortal body, and hastening apace to the dust, therefore let not sin reign in it. It was sin that made our bodies mortal, and therefore do not yield obedience to such an enemy.

5. We must not *yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness*, ver. 13. The members of the body are made use of by the corrupt nature as tools, by which the wills of the flesh are fulfilled ; but we must not consent to that abuse. The members of the body are fearfully and wonderfully made ; it is pity they should be the devil's tools of *unrighteousness unto sin*, i. e. instruments of the sinful actions, according to the sinful dispositions. *Unrighteousness is unto sin* ; the sinful acts confirm and strengthen the sinful habits ; one sin begets another ; it is like the letting forth of water, therefore leave it before it be meddled with. The members of the body may, perhaps, through the prevalency of temptation, be forced to be instruments of sin ; but do not yield them to be so, do not consent to it. This is one branch of sanctification, the mortification of sin.

Secondly, Vivification, or living to righteousness ; and what is that ?

1. It is to *walk in newness of life*, ver. 4. Newness of life supposes newness of heart, for out of it are the issues of life ; and there is no way to make the streams sweet, but by making the spring so : Walking, in scripture is put for the course and tenour of the conversation, which must be new. Walk by new rules, towards new ends, from new principles ; make a new choice of the way ; choose new paths to walk in, new leaders to walk after, new companions to walk with : old things should pass away, and all things become new. The man is what he was not, doth what he did not.

2. It is to *be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, ver. 11. To converse with God, to have a regard to him, a delight in him, a concern for him, the soul upon all occasions carried towards him, as towards an agreeable object, in which it takes a complacency : this is to be *alive to God*. The love of God reigning in the heart, is the life of the soul towards God ; *anima est ubi amat*, *non ubi animat*, where it loves rather than where it lives ; the affections and desires alive towards God.

Or, living (our life in the flesh) unto God, to his honour and glory as our end, by his word and will as our rule ; in all our ways

to acknowledge him, and to have our eye ever towards him ; that is to live unto God.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is our spiritual life ; there is no living to God but through him. He is the mediator ; there can be no comfortable receivings from God, or acceptable regards to God, but in and through Jesus Christ ; no intercourse between sinful souls and a holy God, but by the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Through Christ, as the author and maintainer of this life ; through Christ, as the head from whom we receive vital influence ; through Christ, as the root, by which we derive sap and nourishment, and so live. In living to God, Christ is all in all.

3. It is to *yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead*, ver. 13. The very life and being of holiness lies in the dedication of ourselves to the Lord, giving our own selves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5. Yield ourselves to him, not only as the conquered yields to the conqueror, because he can stand it out no longer ; but as the wife yields herself to her husband, to whom her desire is ; as the scholar yields himself to the teacher, the apprentice to his master to be taught and ruled by him : Not only yield our estates to him, but yield ourselves ; nothing less than our whole selves, ἀσπασατε ἑαυτοὺς, *accommodate yourselves to God* ; so Tremel from the Syriack : Not only submit to him, but comply with him ; not only present your selves to him once for all, but be always ready to him. Yield your selves to him as wax to the seal, to take any impression, to be, and have, and do what he pleases. When Paul said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?* Acts ix. 6. he was then yielded to God.

As those that are alive from the dead. To yield a dead carcass to a living God, is not to please him, but to mock him : yield your selves as those that are alive, and good for something, a *living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1. The surest evidence of our spiritual life is the dedication of ourselves to God. It becomes those that are *alive from the dead* (it may be understood of a death in law) that are justified and delivered from death, to give themselves to him that hath so redeemed them.

4. It is to *yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God*. The members of our bodies, when withdrawn from the service of sin, are not to lie by idle, but to be made use of in the service of God. When the strong man armed is dispossessed, let him, whose right it is, divide the spoils. Though the powers and faculties of the soul be the immediate subject of holiness and righteousness, yet the members of the body are to be instruments ; the body must be always ready to serve the soul in the service of God. Thus, ver. 14. *Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness*. Let them be under the conduct, and at the command of the righteous law of God, and that principle of inherent righteousness, which the Spirit, as a sanctifier plants in the soul.

Righteousness unto holiness ; which intimates growth, and progress, and ground got. As every sinful act confirms the sinful habit, and makes the nature more and more prone to sin ; hence the members of a natural man are here said to be servants to *iniquity unto iniquity* ; one sin makes the heart more disposed for another ; so every gracious act confirms the gracious habit : serving righteousness is *unto holiness* ; one duty fits us for another ; and the more we do, the more we may do for God. Or, serving righteousness, εἰς ἀγιασμόν, as an evidence of sanctification.

For the second, the motives or arguments here used to shew the necessity of sanctification. There is such an antipathy in our hearts by nature to holiness, that it is no easy matter to bring them to submit to it : it is the Spirit's work, who persuades by such inducements as these, set home upon the soul.

1. He argues from our sacramental conformity to Jesus Christ. Our baptism, and the design and intention of it, carries in it a great reason, why we should die to sin, and live to righteousness. Thus we must improve our baptism as a bridle of restraint to keep us in from sin, as a spur of constraint to quicken us to duty. Observe his reasoning.

First, In general, we are *dead to sin*, i. e. in profession, and in obligation. Our baptism signifies our cutting off from the kingdom of sin : We profess to have no more to do with sin : We are dead to sin by a participation of virtue and power for the killing of it, and by our union with Christ and interest in him, in and by whom it is killed. All this is vain, if we persist in sin ; we contradict a profession, violate an obligation, return to that to which we were dead, like walking ghosts ; than which nothing more unbecoming and absurd. For, ver. 7. he that is *dead, is freed from sin*, i. e. he that is dead to it, is freed from the rule and dominion of it ; as the servant that is dead, is freed from his master, Job iii. 19. Now shall we be such fools, as to return to that slavery, from which we are discharged ? When we are delivered out of Egypt, shall we talk of going back to it again ?

Secondly, In particular, being *baptized into Jesus Christ, we were baptized into his death*, ver. 3. We were baptized εἰς Χριστόν, unto Christ, as 1 Cor. x. 2. εἰς Μωϋσιν, unto Moses. Baptism binds us to Christ, it sets us apprentice to Christ, as our teacher, it is our allegiance to Christ as our sovereign. Baptism is *externa assumptio Christi*, by which Christ lays hold on men, and men offer themselves to Christ. Particularly, we were baptized *into his death*, into a participation of the privileges purchased by his death, and

into an obligation both to comply with the design of his death, which was to redeem us from iniquity, and to conform to the pattern of his death, that as Christ died for sin, so we should die to sin. This was the profession and promise of our baptism, and we do not do well if we do not answer this profession, and make good this promise.

First, Our conformity to the death of Christ obligeth us to die unto sin; thereby we know the *fellowship of his sufferings*, Phil. iii. 10. Thus we are here said to be planted together in the *likeness of his death*, ver. 5. τῷ ὁμοιώματι, not only a conformity, but a conformation; as the ingrafted stock is planted together into the likeness of the imp, of the nature of which it doth participate. *Planting* is in order to life and fruitfulness: we are planted in the vineyard, in a likeness to Christ; which likeness we should evidence in sanctification. Our creed concerning Jesus Christ is, among other things, that he was *crucified, dead, and buried*: now baptism is a sacramental conformity to him in each of these, as the apostle here takes notice.

1. Our old man is crucified with him, ver. 6. The death of the cross was a slow death; the body, after it was nailed to the cross, gave many a throw, and many a struggle; but it was a sure death, long in expiring, but expired at last: such is the mortification of sin in believers. It was a cursed death, Gal. iii. 13. Sin dies as a malefactor, devoted to destruction, it is an accursed thing. Though it be a slow death, yet it must needs hasten it, that it is an old man that is crucified; not in the prime of its strength, but decaying: that which waxeth old, is ready to vanish away, Heb. viii. ult. *Crucified with him*, συνεσχημένῳ, not in respect of time, but in respect of causality. The crucifying of Christ for us hath an influence upon the crucifying of sin in us.

2. We are dead with Christ, ver. 8. Christ was obedient to death: when he died, we might be said to die with him, as our dying to sin is an act of conformity both to the design and to the samplar of Christ's dying for sin. Baptism signifies and seals our union with Christ, our engrafting into Christ; so that we are dead with him, and engaged to have no more to do with sin than he had.

3. *We are buried with him by baptism*, ver. 4. Our conformity is compleat. We are in profession quite cut off from all commerce and communion with sin, as those that are buried are quite cut off from the world; not only not of the living, but no more among the living, have nothing more to do with them. Thus must we be, as Christ was, separate from sin and sinners.

We are buried, viz. in profession and obligation: we profess to be so, and we are bound to be so; it was our covenant and engagement in baptism; we are sealed to be the Lord's, therefore to be cut off from sin. Why this burying in baptism should so much as allude to any custom of dipping under water in baptism, any more than our baptismal crucifixion and death should have any such reference, I confess, I cannot see. It is plain, that it is not the sign, but the thing signified in baptism, that the apostle here calls being *buried with Christ*; and the expression of burying alludes to Christ's burial. As Christ was buried that he might rise again to a new and more heavenly life, so we are in baptism buried, i. e. cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life of faith and love.

Secondly, Our conformity to the resurrection of Christ obligeth us to rise again to newness of life. That is the *power of his resurrection*, which Paul was so desirous to know, Phil. iii. 10. Christ was raised up *from the dead by the glory of the Father*, i. e. by the power of the Father, the power of God is his glory; it is glorious power, Col. i. 11. Now in baptism we are obliged to conform to that pattern, to be planted in the *likeness of his resurrection*, ver. 5. to *live with him*, ver. 8. See Col. ii. 12. Conversion is the first resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and this resurrection conformable to Christ's resurrection. This conformity of the saints to the resurrection of Christ, seems to be intimated in the rising of so many of the bodies of the saints; which though mentioned before by anticipation, is supposed to have been concomitant with Christ's resurrection. Mat. xxvii. 52. We are all risen with Christ.

In two things we must conform to the resurrection of Christ.

1. He rose to *die no more*, ver. 9. We read of many others that were raised from the dead, but they rose to die again; but when Christ rose, he rose to die no more; therefore he left his grave-clothes behind him, whereas Lazarus, who was to die again, brought them out with him, as one that should have occasion to use them again: but over Christ *death has no more dominion*; he was dead indeed, but he is alive, and so alive, that he lives for evermore, Rev. i. 18.

Thus we must rise from the grave of sin, never again to return to it, or to have any more fellowship with the works of darkness, having quitted that grave, that land of darkness, as darkness itself.

2. He rose to live unto God, ver. 10. i. e. to live a heavenly life, to receive that glory which was set before him. Others that

were raised from the dead, returned to the same life in every respect which they had before lived; but so did not Christ, he rose again to *leave the world*. Now I am no more in the world, John xiii. 1. xvii. 11. He rose to *live to God*, i. e. to intercede and rule, and all to the glory of the Father.

Thus must we rise to *live to God*: that is it which he calls *newness of life*, ver. 4. to live from other principles, by other rules, with other aims, than we have done. A life devoted to God is a new life; before, self was the chief and highest end, but now God. To live indeed, is to live to God, with our eyes ever towards him, making him the centre of all our actions.

2. He argues from the precious promises and privileges of the new covenant, ver. 14. It might be objected, that we cannot conquer and subdue sin, it is unavoidably too hard for us. No, saith he, you wrestle with an enemy that may be dealt with, and subdued, if you will but keep your ground, and stand to your arms; it is an enemy that is already foiled and baffled; there is strength laid up in the covenant of grace for your assistance, if you will but use it. *Sin shall not have dominion*. God's promises to us are more powerful and effectual for the mortifying of sin, than our promises to God. Sin may struggle in a believer, and may create him a great deal of trouble; but it shall not have dominion; may vex him, but it shall not rule over him.

For we are not under the law, but under grace; not under the law of sin and death, but under the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus: we are acted by other principles than we have been: New lords, new laws. Or, not under the covenant of works, which requires brick, and gives no straw, which condemns upon the least failure, which runs thus, do this, and live, do it not and die; but under the covenant of grace, which accepts sincerity as our gospel perfection, which requires nothing but what it promises strength to perform; which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant doth not put us out of covenant; and especially, that it doth not leave our salvation in our own keeping, but lays it up in the hands of the mediator, who undertakes for us, that sin shall not have dominion over us; hath himself condemned it, and will destroy it; so that if we pursue the victory, we shall come off more than conquerors. Christ rules by the golden sceptre of grace, and he will not let sin have dominion over those that are willing subjects to that rule. This is a very comfortable word to all true believers: if we were under the law, we were undone, for the law curseth every one that continues not in every thing; but we are under grace, grace which accepts the willing mind, which is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, which leaves room for repentance, which promises pardon upon repentance: and what can be to an ingenuous mind a stronger motive than this to have nothing to do with sin? Shall we sin against so much goodness, abuse such love?

Some, perhaps, might suck poison out of this flower, and disingenuously use this as an encouragement to sin: See how the apostle starts at such a thought, ver. 15. *Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid*. What can be more black and ill-natured, than from a friend's extraordinary expressions of kindness and good-will, to take occasion to affront and offend him? To spurn at such bowels, to spit in the face of such love, is that which between man and man all the world would cry out shame on.

3. He argues from the evidence that this will be of our state, making for us, or against us, ver. 16. *To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are*. All the children of men are either the servants of God, or the servants of sin; these are the two families: Now, if we would know to which of these families we belong, we must enquire to which of these masters we yield obedience. Our obeying the laws of sin will be an evidence against us, that we belong to that family, on which death is entailed: As, on the contrary, our obeying the laws of Christ will evidence our relation to Christ's family.

4. He argues from their former sinfulness, ver. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. where we may observe,

1. What they had been and done formerly. We have need to be often minded of our former state. Paul frequently remembers it concerning himself, and those to whom he writes.

First, Ye were the *servants of sin*. Those that are now the servants of God, would do well to remember the time when they were the *servants of sin*; to keep them humble, penitent, and watchful, and to quicken them in the service of God. It is a reproach to the service of sin, that so many thousands have quitted the service, and shaken off the yoke; and never any that sincerely deserted it, and gave up themselves to the service of God, have returned to the former drudgery. *God be thanked that you were so*, i. e. that though you were so, yet you have obeyed. You were so God be thanked that we can speak of it as a thing past: you were so, but you are not now so. Nay, your having been so formerly tends much to the magnifying of divine mercy and grace in the happy change: God be thanked that the former sinfulness is such a toil, and such a spur to your present holiness.

Secondly, *Ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity*, ver. 19. It is the misery of a sinful state, that

the body is made a drudge to sin, than which there could not be a baser or a harder slavery, like that of *the prodigal that was sent into the fields to feed swine*. *Ye have yielded*: Sinners are voluntary in the service of sin: The devil could not force them into the service, if they did not yield themselves to it. This will justify God in the ruin of sinners, that they sold themselves to work wickedness, it was their own act and deed.

To iniquity unto iniquity. Every sinful act strengthens and confirms the sinful habit; *to iniquity* as the work, *unto iniquity* as the wages: Sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind; growing worse and worse, more and more hardened.

This he speaks *after the manner of men*, i. e. he fetcheth a similitude from that which is common among men, even the change of services and subjections.

Thirdly, *Ye were free from righteousness*, ver. 20. not free by any liberty given, but by a liberty taken, which is licentiousness: *You were* altogether void of that which is good, void of any good principles, motions, or inclinations; void of all subjection to the law and will of God, of all conformity to his image; and this you were hugely pleased with, as a freedom, and a liberty; but a freedom from *righteousness* is the worst kind of slavery.

(2.) How the blessed change was made, and wherein it did consist.

First, *You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you*, ver. 17. This describes conversion, what it is; it is our conformity to, and compliance with the gospel, *which was delivered you* by Christ, and his ministers: Margin, *Whereto ye were delivered*; *εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε*, into which you were delivered: And so observe,

1. The rule of grace, *that form of doctrine*, *τύπον διδασχῆς*: The gospel is the great rule both of truth and holiness; it is the stamp, grace is the impression of that stamp; it is the form of healing words, 2 Tim. i. 13.

2. The nature of grace, as it is our conformity to that rule. It is to *obey it from the heart*. The gospel is a doctrine not only to be believed, but to be obeyed; and that *from the heart*; which notes the sincerity and reality of that obedience; not in profession only, but in power; *from the heart*, the innermost part, the commanding part of us.

It is to be *delivered into it*, as into a mould, as the wax is cast into the impression of the seal, answering it line for line, stroke for stroke, and wholly representing the shape and figure of it. To be a Christian indeed, is to be transformed into the likeness and similitude of the gospel, our souls answering it, complying with it, conformed to it: Understanding, will, affections, aims, principles, actions, all according to *that form of doctrine*.

Secondly, *Being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness*, ver. 18. *Servants to God*, ver. 22. Conversion is, 1. A freedom from the service of sin; it is the shaking off of that yoke, resolving to have no more to do with it. 2. A resignation of ourselves to the service of God and *righteousness*; to God as our master, to *righteousness* as our work: When we are *made free from sin*, it is not that we may live as we list, and be our own masters; no; when we are delivered out of Egypt, we are, as Israel, led to the holy mountain to receive the law, and are there brought into the bond of the covenant.

Observe, We cannot be made *the servants of God*, till we are freed from the power and dominion of sin; we cannot serve two masters so directly opposite one to another, as God and sin are: We must, with the prodigal, quit the drudgery of the citizen of the country, before we can come to our Father's house.

(3.) What apprehensions they now had of their former work, and way: He appeals to themselves, ver. 21. whether they had not found the service of sin, (1.) An unfruitful service: *What fruit had you then?* Did you ever get any thing by it? Sit down and cast up the account, reckon your gains, *what fruit had you then?* Besides the future losses, which are infinitely great, the very present gains of sin are not worth mentioning: *What fruit!* Nothing that deserves the name of fruit; the present pleasure and profit of sin doth not deserve to be called fruit; it is but *chaff*, *plowing iniquity, sowing vanity, and reaping the same*. (2.) It is an unbecoming service; it is that of which we *are now ashamed*; ashamed of the folly, ashamed of the filth of it: Shame came into the world with sin, and is still the certain product of it; either the shame of repentance, or, if not that, eternal shame and contempt: Who would wilfully do that, which, sooner or later, he is sure to be ashamed of?

5. Lastly, He argues, from the end of all these things, it is the prerogative of rational creatures, that they are endued with a power of prospect, are capable of looking forward, considering the latter end of things, to persuade us from sin to holiness; here is *blessing and cursing, good and evil, life and death, set before us*; and we are put to our choice.

First, The end of sin is death, ver. 21. *The end of those things is death*. Though the way may seem pleasant and inviting, yet the end is dismal; *at the last it bites*; it will be bitterness in the latter end.

The wages of sin is death, ver. 23. Death is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned, as *wages* are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin; there is no sin in its

own nature venial; *death is the wages of the least sin*; sin is here represented, either as the work for which *the wages* is given, or as the master by whom *the wages* is given; all that are sin's servants, and do sin's work, must expect to be thus paid.

Secondly, *If the fruit be unto holiness*, if there be an active principle of true and growing grace, *the end will be everlasting life*; a very happy end! though the way be up-hill, though it be narrow, and thorny, and beset, yet *everlasting life at the end* of it is sure: So, ver. 23. *The gift of God is eternal life*. Heaven is life, consisting in the vision and fruition of God; and it is *eternal life*, no infirmities attending it, no death to put a period to it. This is *the gift of God*. *The death is the wages of sin*, it comes by desert; but *the life is a gift*, it comes by favour: Sinners merit hell, but saints do not merit heaven; there is no proportion between the glory of heaven, and our obedience; we must thank God, and not ourselves, if ever we get to heaven: And this gift is *through Jesus Christ our Lord*: It is Christ that purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it; he is *the alpha and omega*, all in all in our salvation.

C H A P. VII.

We may observe in this chapter, 1. Our freedom from the law further urged as an argument to press upon us sanctification, ver. 1,—6. 2. The excellency and usefulness of the law asserted and proved from the apostles own experience notwithstanding, ver. 7,—14. 3. A description of the conflict between grace and corruption in the heart, ver. 14, 15. &c. ad finem.

1. **K** NOW ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth? 2. For the woman which hath an husband, is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. 3. So then if while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4. Wherefore, my brethren; ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Among other arguments used in the foregoing chapter to persuade us against sin, and to holiness, this was one, ver. 14. that *we are not under the law*; and that argument he is here further insisting upon, and explaining, ver. 6. *We are delivered from the law*. What doth he mean by that? and how is it an argument why sin should *not reign over us*, and why we should *walk in newness of life*?

1. *We are delivered from* that power of *the law*, which curseth and condemneth us for the sin committed by us: The sentence of the law against us is vacated and reversed by the death of Christ to all true believers. The law saith, *the soul that sins shall die*; but *we are delivered from the law*; *the Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die*: We are redeemed from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13.

2. *We are delivered from* that power of *the law*, which irritates and provokes the sin that dwelleth in us: This the apostle seems especially to refer to, ver. 5. *The motions of sin which were by the law*. The law, by commanding, forbidding, threatening corrupt and fallen man, but offering no grace to cure and strengthen, did but stir up the corruption, and, like the sun shining upon a dunghil, excite and draw up the filthy streams: We being lamed by the fall, the law comes and directs us, but provides nothing to heal and help our lameness, and so makes us halt and stumble the more: Understand this not of the law as a rule, but as a covenant of works.

Now each of these are an argument why we should be holy; for here is encouragement to endeavours, though in many things we come short: We are *under grace*, which promiseth strength to do what it commands, and pardon, upon repentance, when we do amiss: This is the scope of these verses in general, that, in point of profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works; under the gospel of Christ, and not under the law of Moses. The difference between a law state, and a gospel state, he had before illustrated, by the similitude of rising to a new life, and serving a new master; now here

he speaks of it under the similitude of being married to a new husband.

1. Our first marriage was to the law, which, according to the law of marriage, was to continue only during the life of the law. The law of marriage is obliging only till the death of one of the parties, no matter which, and no longer. The death of either disoblige both.

For this he appealeth to themselves, as persons knowing the law, *ver. 1. I speak to them that know the law.* It is a great advantage to discourse with those that have knowledge; for such can more readily understand and apprehend a truth. Many of the Christians at Rome were such as had been Jews, and so were well acquainted with the law. One hath some hold of knowing people.

The law hath power over a man as long as he liveth; in particular, the law of marriage has so; or, in general, every law is so limited. The laws of nations, of relations, families.

1. The obligation of laws extends no further; by death the servant that, while he lived, was under the yoke, is freed from his master, Job ii. 19.

2. The condemnation of laws extends no further; death is the finishing of the law: *Actio moritur cum persona.* The severest laws could but kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do.

Thus while we were alive to the law, we were under the power of it; while we were in our Old Testament state, before the gospel came into the world, and before it came with power into our hearts.

Such is the law of marriage, *ver. 2.* The woman is bound to her husband during life; so bound to him, that she cannot marry another; if she do, she shall be reckoned an adulteress, *ver. 3.* It will make her an adulteress, not only to be defiled by, but to be married to another man; for that is so much the worse, upon this account, that it abuseth an ordinance of God, by making it to patronize the uncleanness.

Thus were we married to the law, *ver. 5.* *When we were in the flesh.* i. e. in a carnal state, under the reigning power of sin and corruption; in the flesh, as in our element; then the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members, we were carried down the stream of sin; and the law was but as an imperfect dam, which made the stream to swell the higher, and rage the more; our desire was to sin, as that of the wife to her husband, and sin ruled over us; we embraced it, loved it, devoted all to it, conversed daily with it, made it our care to please it; we were under a law of sin and death, as the wife under the law of marriage; and the product of this marriage was fruit brought forth unto death, i. e. actual transgressions were produced by the original corruptions, such as deserve death. Lust having conceived, by the law (which is the strength of sin, 1 Cor. xv. 56.) bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, Jam. i. 15. There is the posterity that springs from this marriage to sin and the law. This comes of the motions of sin working in our members. And this continues during life, while the law is alive to us, and we to the law.

2. Our second marriage is to Christ: and how comes that about? Why,

1. We are freed, by death, from our obligations to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her obligation to her husband, *ver. 3.* This reddition is not very close, nor needed it, *ver. 4.* *Ye are become dead to the law.* He doth not say, the law is dead; some think, because he would avoid giving offence to those who were yet zealous for the law; but, which comes all to one, *ye are dead to the law;* as the crucifying of the world to us, and of us to the world, amounts to one and the same thing; so doth the law dying, and our dying to it. We are delivered from the law, *ver. 6.* *καταργησιν*, we are nulled as to the law; our obligation to it as a husband, cassated and made void. And then he speaks of the law being dead, as far as it was an imprisoned law to us, *that being dead wherein we were held;* not the law itself, but its obligation to punishment, and its provocation to sin, that is dead, it has lost its power; and this, *ver. 4.* *by the body of Christ,* i. e. by the sufferings of Christ in his body, by his crucified body, which abrogated the law, answered the demands of it, made satisfaction for our violation of it, purchased for us a covenant of grace, in which righteousness and strength are laid up for us, such as were not, nor could be by the law: We are dead to the law by our union with the mystical body of Christ, by being incorporated into Christ in our baptism professedly, in our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, have no more to do with it, than the dead servant that is free from his master hath to do with his master's yoke.

2. We are married to Christ. The day of our believing is the day of our espousals to the Lord Jesus. We enter upon a life of dependence on him, and duty to him. *Married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead;* a periphrasis of Christ, very pertinent here; for as our dying to sin and the law is in conformity to the death of Christ, and the crucifying of his body; so our devotedness to Christ in newness of life, is in conformity to the resurrection of Christ. We are married to the

raised, exalted Jesus; a very honourable marriage: Compare 2 Cor. xi. 2. *Eph. v. 29.* Now we are thus married to Christ,

1. That we should bring forth fruit unto God. One end of marriage is fruitfulness: God instituted the ordinance, that he might seek a godly seed, Mal. 2. 15. The wife is compared to the fruitful vine, and children are called the fruit of the womb: Now the great end of our marriage to Christ is our fruitfulness in love, and grace, and every good work. That is fruit unto God, pleasing to God, according to his will, aiming at his glory: As our old marriage to sin produced fruit unto death, so our second marriage to Christ produceth fruit unto God, fruits of righteousness.

Good works are the child of the new nature, the products of our union with Christ; as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its union with the root. Whatever our professions and pretensions be, there is no fruit brought forth to God, till we are married to Christ; it is in Christ Jesus that we are created unto good works, *Eph. 2. 10.* That is the only fruit turning to a good account, which is brought forth in Christ. This distinguisheth the good works of believers from the good works of hypocrites and self-justifiers, that they are brought forth in marriage, done in union with Christ, in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col. iii. 17. This is, without controversy, one of the great mysteries of godliness.

2. That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, *ver. 6.* Being married to a new husband, we must change our way. Still we must serve, but it is a service that is perfect freedom, whereas the service of sin was a perfect drudgery: we must now serve in newness of spirit, by new spiritual rules, from new spiritual principles, in the spirit, and in truth, *Job. iv. 24.* There must be a renovation of our spirits wrought by the Spirit of God, and in that we must serve.

Not in the oldness of the letter, i. e. we must not rest in mere external services, as the carnal Jews did, that gloried in their adherence to the letter of the law, and minded not the spiritual part of worship. The letter is said to kill with its bondage and terror, but we are delivered from that yoke, that we might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, *Luke i. 74, 75.* we are under the dispensation of the Spirit, and therefore must be spiritual, and serve in the spirit. Compare with this 2 Cor. iii. 3, 6, &c. It becomes us to worship within the veil, and no longer in the outward court.

7. What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9. For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11. For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12. Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13. Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. 14. For we know that the law is spiritual: —

To what he had said in the former paragraph, the apostle here raiseth an objection, which he answers very fully: *What shall we say then? is the law sin?* When he had been speaking of the dominion of sin, he had said so much of the influence of the law as a covenant upon that dominion, that it might easily be misinterpreted as a reflexion upon the law; to prevent which he shews from his own experience, the great excellency and usefulness of the law, not as a covenant, but as a guide; and further discovers how sin took occasion by the commandment.

Observe in particular,

1. The great excellency of the law in itself. Far be it from Paul to reflect upon the law; no, he speaks honourably of it.

1. It is holy, just, and good, *ver. 12.* The law in general is so, every particular commandment is so; laws are as the law-makers are; God, the great lawgiver, is holy, just and good, therefore his law must needs be so. The matter of it is holy, it commands holiness, encourageth holiness; it is holy, for it is agreeable to the holy will of God, the original of holiness: It is just, for it is consonant to the rules of equity and right reason; the ways of the Lord are right. It is good in the design of it; it is given for the good of mankind, for the conservation of peace and order in the world; it makes the observers of it good; the intention of it was to better and reform mankind. Wherever there is true grace, there is an assent to this, that the law is holy, just, and good.

(2.) The

(2.) The law is *spiritual*, ver. 14. not only in regard of the effect of it, as it is a means of making us spiritual; but in regard of the extent of it, it reacheth our spirits, it lays restraint upon, and gives direction to, the motions of the inward man; *it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. iv. 12. it forbids spiritual wickedness, heart-murder, and heart-adultery; it commands spiritual service, requires the heart, obligeth us to worship God in the spirit. It is a spiritual law, for it is given by God, who is a spirit, and the Father of spirits; it is given to man, whose principal part is spiritual; the soul is the best part, and the leading part of the man, and therefore the law to the man must needs be a law to the soul. Herein the law of God is above all other laws, that it is a spiritual law. Other laws may forbid *compassing and imagining*, &c. which is treason in the heart, but cannot take cognizance thereof, unless there be some overt-act; but the law of God takes notice of the iniquity regarded in the heart, though it go no further. *Wash thy heart from wickedness*, Jer. iv. 14:

We know that. Wherever there is true grace, there is an experimental knowledge of the spirituality of the law of God.

2. The great advantage that he had found by the law.

(1.) It was discovering. *I had not known sin but by the law*, ver. 7. As that which is straight discovers that which is crooked, as the looking-glass shews us our natural face, with all its spots and deformities; so there is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and consequently to peace and pardon, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law.

Particularly he came to the knowledge of the sinfulness of lust by the law of the tenth commandment. By *lust* he means sin dwelling in us, sin in its first motions and workings, the corrupt principle. This he came to know when the law said, *thou shalt not covet*; the law spoke in other languages than the scribes and Pharisees made it to speak in; it spoke in the spiritual sense and meaning of it. By this he knew that lust is sin, and a very sinful sin; that those motions and desires of the heart towards sin, which never come into act, are sinful, exceeding sinful. Paul had a very quick and piercing judgment, all the advantages and improvements of education, and yet never got the right knowledge of indwelling sin, till the Spirit, by the law, made it known to him. There is nothing about which the natural man is more blind, than about original corruption, concerning which the understanding is altogether in the dark, till the Spirit, by the law, reveal it and make it known.

Thus the law is a school-master to bring us to Christ; opens and searches the wound, and so prepares it for healing: Thus sin by the commandment, does appear *sin*, ver. 13. it appears in its own colours, appears to be what it is, and you cannot call it by a worse name than its own: Thus, by the commandment, it becomes *exceeding sinful*, i. e. it appears to be so. We never see the desperate venom and malignity there is in sin, till we come to compare it with the law, and the spiritual nature of the law, and then we see it to be an evil and a bitter thing.

(2.) It was humbling, ver. 9. *I was alive*, i. e. he thought himself in a very good condition; he was alive in his own opinion and apprehension; very secure and confident of the goodness of his state. Thus he was *once*, *ὄντως*, in times past, when he was a Pharisee; for it was the common temper of that generation of men, that they had a very good conceit of themselves; and Paul was then like the rest of them, and the reason was, he was then *without the law*. Though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, though himself a great student in the law, a strict observer of it, and a zealous stickler for it; yet *without the law*. He had the letter of the law, but he had not the spiritual meaning of it; the shell, but not the kernel. He had the law in his hand and in his head, but he had it not in his heart; the notion of it, but not the power of it. There are a great many who are spiritually dead in sin, that yet are alive in their own opinion of themselves, and it is their strangeness to the law that is the cause of the mistake.

But *when the commandment came*, came in the power of it; not to his eyes only, but to his heart: *Sin revived*, as the dust in a room rises, i. e. appears, when the sun-shine is let into it. Paul then saw that in sin, which he had never seen before; he then saw *sin in its causes*, the bitter root, the corrupt byas, the bent to backslide; *sin in its colours*, deforming, defiling, breaking a righteous law, affronting an awful Majesty, profaning a sovereign crown by casting it to the ground; *sin in its consequences*, sin with death at the heels of it, sin, and the curse entailed upon it: Thus sin revived, and then *I died*, I lost that good opinion which I had had of myself, and came to be of another mind. *Sin revived, and I died*, i. e. the Spirit, by the commandment, convinced me to be in a state of sin, and in a state of death because of sin.

Of this excellent use is the law, it is a lamp and a light, it converteth the soul, openeth the eyes, prepares the way of the Lord in the desert, rends the rocks, levels the mountains, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord.

3. The ill use that his corrupt nature made of the law notwithstanding.

No. CVI.

First, *Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence*, ver. 8. Observe, Paul had in him *all manner of concupiscence*, though one of the best unregenerated men that ever was; as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, and yet sensible of all manner of concupiscence. And it was *sin* that wrought it, i. e. indwelling sin, his corrupt nature, he speaks of a sin that did work sin; and it took *occasion by the commandment*. The corrupt nature would not have swelled and raged so much, if it had not been for the restraints of the law; as the peccant humours of the body are raised, and more inflamed by a purge that is not strong enough to carry them off. It is incident to corrupt nature, *in vetitum niti*. Ever since Adam eat forbidden fruit, we have all been fond of forbidden paths; the diseased appetite is carried out most strongly towards that which is hurtful and prohibited. *Without the law sin was dead*, as a snake in winter, which the sun-beams of the law quicken and irritate.

Secondly, *It deceived me*. Sin puts a cheat upon the sinner, and it is a fatal cheat, ver. 11. *By it*, i. e. by the commandment, *flew me*. There being in the law no such express threatening against sinful lustings, sin, i. e. his own corrupt nature, took occasion from thence to promise him impunity, and to say, as the serpent to our first parents, Ye shall not surely die: Thus it deceived and flew him.

Thirdly, *It wrought death in me by that which is good*, ver. 13. That which works concupiscence, works death, for sin bringeth forth death. Nothing so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it, and make it an occasion of sin; no flower so sweet, but it will suck poison out of it. Now in this, sin *appears sin*. The worst thing that sin doth, and most like itself, is the perverting of the law, and taking occasion from it to be so much the more malignant.

Thus the commandment, which was *ordained to life*, was intended as a guide in the way to comfort and happiness, proved unto *death*, through the corruption of nature, ver. 10. Many a precious soul splits upon the rock of salvation: And the same word which to some is an occasion of life unto life, is to others an occasion of death unto death. The same sun that makes the garden of flowers more fragrant, makes the dunghil more noisome: the same heat that softens wax, hardens clay; the same child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The way to prevent this mischief, is to bow our souls to the commanding authority of the word and law of God, not striving against, but submitting to it.

14. — But I am carnal, sold under sin. 15. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good. 17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform that which is good, I find not. 19. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. 23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! 25. I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Here is a description of the conflict between grace and corruption in the heart; betwixt the law of God and the law of sin. And it is applicable two ways:

First, To the struggles that are in a convinced soul, but yet unregenerate: In the person of whom it is supposed, by some, that Paul speaks.

Secondly, To the struggles that are in a renewed sanctified soul, but yet in a state of imperfection, as others apprehend. And a great controversy there is, of which of these we are to understand the apostle here. So far doth the evil prevail here, when he speaks of one sold under sin, doing it, not performing that which is good; that it seems hard to apply it to the regenerate, who are described to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And yet so far do the good prevail in hating sin, consenting to the law, delighting in it, serving the law of God with the mind, that it is more hard to apply it to the unregenerate, that are dead in trespasses and sins.

First, Applying it to the struggles that are in a convinced soul, that is yet in a state of sin, knows his Lord's will, but doth it not, approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed

out

out of the law, and yet lives in the constant breach of it, *Rom. ii. 17—23.* though he has that within him that witnesseth against the sin he commits, and it is not without a great deal of reluctancy that he doth commit it; the superior faculties striving against it, natural conscience warning against it before it is committed, and smiting for it afterwards; yet the man continues a slave to his reigning lusts.

It is not thus with every unregenerate man, but with those only that are convinced by the law, but not changed by the gospel. The apostle had said, *chap. vi. 14. That sin shall not have dominion, because you are not under the law, but under grace.* For the proof of which he here shews, that a man under the law, and not under grace, may be, and is under the dominion of sin; the law may discover sin, and convince of sin, but it cannot conquer and subdue sin, witness the predominancy of sin in many, that are under very strong legal convictions. It discovers the defilement, but will not wash it off. It makes a man *weary and heavy laden*, *Matt. xi. 28.* burdens him with his sin; and yet if rested in, it yields no help towards the shaking off of that burden, that is to be had only in Christ. The law may make a man cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?* and yet leave him thus fettered and captivated, as being too weak to deliver him, *chap. viii. 3.* give him a spirit of bondage to fear, *chap. viii. 15.* Now a soul advanced thus far by the law, is in a fair way towards a state of liberty by Christ; though many rest here, and go no further. Felix trembled, but never came to Christ. It is possible for a man to go to hell with his eyes open, *Num. xxiv. 3, 4.* illuminated with common convictions; and to carry about with him a self-accusing conscience, even in the service of the devil; he may *consent to the law, that it is good; delight to know God's ways,* as they, *Iſa. lviii. 2.* may have that within him, that witnesseth against sin, and to holiness; and yet all this overpowered by the reigning love of sin. Drunkards and unclean persons have some faint desires to leave off their sins, and yet persist in them notwithstanding; such is the impotency and insufficiency of their convictions.

Of such as these there are many that will needs have all this understood, and contend earnestly for it: though it is very hard to imagine, why, if the apostle intended this, he should speak all along in his own person; and not only so, but in the present tense. Of his own state under conviction he had spoken at large, as of a thing past, *ver. 7, &c. I died; the commandment I found to be unto death;* and if here he speaks of the same state as his present state, and the condition he was now in, sure he did not intend to be understood: and therefore,

Secondly, It seems rather to be understood of the struggles that are between grace and corruption in sanctified souls. That there are remainders of indwelling corruption, even there where there is a living principle of grace, is past dispute; that that corruption is daily breaking forth in sins of infirmity, such as are consistent with a state of grace, is no less certain. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, *1 John i. 8, 10.* That true grace strives against these sins and corruptions, doth not allow of them, hates them, mourns over them, groans under them as a burden, is likewise certain, *Gal. v. 17. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* These are the truths which I think are contained in this discourse of the apostle's. And his design is further to open the nature of sanctification, that it doth not attain to a sinless perfection in this life: and therefore to quicken us to, and encourage us in, our conflicts with remaining corruptions; our case is not singular, that which we do sincerely strive against, shall not be laid to our charge; and through grace the victory is sure at last. The struggle here is like that between Jacob and Esau in the womb, between the Canaanites and the Israelites in the land, between the house of Saul and the house of David: but great is the truth, and will prevail.

Understanding it thus, we may observe here,

1. What he complains of; the remainder of indwelling corruptions, which he here speaks of, to shew, that the law is insufficient to justify even a regenerate man, that the best man in the world hath enough in him to condemn him, if God should deal with him according to the law; which is not the fault of the law, but of our own corrupt nature, which cannot fulfil the law. The repetition of the same things over and over again in this discourse, shews, how much Paul's heart was affected with what he wrote, and how deep his sentiments were.

Observe the particulars of this complaint.

(1.) *I am carnal, sold under sin,* *ver. 14.* he speaks of the Corinthians as carnal, *1 Cor. iii. 1.* Even there, where there is spiritual life, there are remainders of carnal affections, and a man may be so far sold under sin; he does not sell himself to work wickedness, as Ahab did, *1 Kings xxi. 25.* but he was sold by Adam when he sinned and fell; sold, as a poor slave that doth his master's will against his own will; sold under sin, because conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

(2.) *What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I,* *ver. 15.* And to the same purpose, *ver. 19, 21. When I would do good, evil is present with me.* Such was the strength of cor-

ruptions, that he could not reach at that perfection in holiness which he did desire and breathe after. Thus, while he was pressing forwards towards perfection, yet he acknowledgeth that he had not already attained, neither was already perfect, *Phil. iii. 12.* Fain he would be free from all sin, and perfectly do the will of God, such was his settled judgment; but his corrupt nature drew him another way; it was like a clog, that checked and kept him down when he would have soared upwards; like the byass in a bowl, that when it is thrown straight, yet draws it aside.

(3.) *In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good,* *ver. 18.* Here he explains himself concerning the corrupt nature, which he calls flesh; and as far as that goes, there is no good to be expected; no more than one would expect good corn growing upon a rock, or on the sand which is by the sea-side. As the new nature, as far as that goes, cannot commit sin, *1 John iii. 9.* so the flesh, the old nature, as far as that goes, cannot perform a good duty. How should it? for the flesh *serveth the law of sin,* *ver. 25.* it is under the conduct and government of that law; and while it is so, it is not like to do any good.

The corrupt nature is elsewhere called flesh, *Gen. vi. 3.* *John iii. 6.* and though there may be good things dwelling in those that have this flesh; yet, as far as the flesh goes, there is no good; the flesh is not a subject capable of any good.

(4.) *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,* *ver. 23.* The corrupt and sinful inclination is here compared to a law, because it controlled and checked him in his good motions. It is said to be seated in his members; because Christ having set up his throne in his heart, it was only the rebellious members of the body that were the instruments of sin. In the sensitive appetite, or we may take it more generally, for all that corrupt nature, which is the seat not only of sensual, but of more refined lusts. This wars against the law of the mind, i. e. the new nature; it draws the contrary way, drives on a contrary interest; which corrupt disposition and inclination is as great a burden and grief to the soul, as the worst drudgery and captivity could be. *It brings me into captivity.*

To the same purpose, *ver. 25. With the flesh I serve the law of sin,* i. e. the corrupt nature, the unregenerate part is continually working towards sin.

(5.) His general complaint we have, *ver. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* The thing he complains of, is a body of death; either the body of flesh, which is a mortal, dying body; while we carry this body about with us, we shall be troubled with corruption; when we are dead, we shall be freed from sin, and not before; or the body of sin, the old man, the corrupt nature, which tends to death, i. e. to the ruin of the soul: Or, comparing it to a dead body, the touch of which, was, by the ceremonial law, defiling. If actual transgressions be *dead works*, *Heb. ix. 14.* original corruption is a *dead body.* It was as troublesome to Paul as if had had a dead body tied to him, which he must have carried about with him. This made him cry out, *O wretched man that I am!* A man that had learned, in every estate, to be content, yet complains thus of his corrupt nature. Had I been to have spoken of Paul, I should have said, O blessed man that thou art, an ambassador of Christ, a favourite of heaven, a spiritual father of thousands; but in his own account, he was a wretched man, because of the corruption of nature, because he was not so good as he fain would be; had not yet attained, neither was already perfect. Thus miserably doth he complain.

Who shall deliver me? He speaks like one that were sick of it, would give any thing to be rid of it; looks to the right hand and to the left for some friend that would part between him and his corruptions. The remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul.

2. What he comforts himself with. The case was sad, but there were some allays. Three things comforted him.

(1.) That his conscience witnesseth for him, that he had a good principle ruling and prevailing in him notwithstanding. It is well when all doth not go one way in the soul. The rule of this good principle which he had, was the law of God; to which he here speaks of a three-fold regard he had; which is certainly to be found in all that are sanctified, and no others.

First, *I consent unto the law that it is good,* *ver. 16. σύμφορι,* I give my vote to the law; there is the approbation of the judgment. Wherever there is grace, there is not only a dread of the severity of the law, but a consent to the goodness of the law; it is good in itself, it is good for me. This is a sign that the law is written in the heart, that the soul is delivered into the mould of it. To consent to the law, is so far to approve of it, as not to wish it otherwise constituted than it is. The sanctified judgment doth not only concur to the equity of the law, but to the excellency of it, as convinced that a conformity to the law is the highest perfection of the human nature, and the greatest honour and happiness we are capable of.

Secondly, *I delight in the law of God after the inward man,* *ver. 22.* His conscience bore witness to a complacency in the law. He delighted not only in the promises of the word, but in the precepts and prohibitions of the word; *συνήδομαι,* it speaks a becoming

a becoming delight. He did herein concur in affection with all the saints. All that are savingly regenerate and born again, do truly delight in the law of God; delight to know it, to do it; cheerfully submit to the authority of it, and take a complacency in that submission; never better pleased than when heart and life are in the strictest conformity to the law and will of God.

After the inward man; that is, (1.) The mind or rational faculties, in opposition to the sensitive appetite and wills of the flesh. The soul is the inward man, and that is the seat of gracious delights, which are therefore sincere and serious, but secret; it is the renewing of the inward man, 2 Cor. iv. 16. (2.) The new nature. The new man is called the inner man, Eph. iii. 16. the hidden man of the heart, 1 Pet. iii. 4. Paul, as far as he was sanctified, had a delight in the law of God.

Thirdly, *With the mind I myself serve the law of God*, ver. 25. It is not enough to consent to the law, and to delight in the law, but we must serve the law; our souls must be entirely delivered up into the obedience of it. Thus it was with Paul's mind; thus it is with every sanctified renewed mind; that is the ordinary course and way; thitherward goes the bent of the soul. *I myself*, αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, plainly intimating that he speaks in his own person, and not in the person of another.

(2.) That the fault lay in that corruption of his nature, which he did really bewail and strive against. *It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*. This he mentions twice, ver. 17, 20. not as an excuse for the guilt of his sin; it is enough to condemn us, if we were under the law, that the sin that doth the evil dwelleth in us; but as a salvo for his evidences, that he might not sink in despair, but take comfort from the covenant of grace, which accepts the willingness of the spirit, and has provided pardon for the weakness of the flesh.

He doth likewise herein enter a protestation against all that which this indwelling sin produced. Having professed his consent to the law of God, he here professeth his dissent from the law of sin. It is not I, I disown the fact, it is against my mind that it is done: As when in the senate the major part are bad, and carry every thing the wrong way, it is indeed the act of the senate, but the honest party strive against it, bewail what is done, and enter their protestation against it; so that it is no more they that do it.

Dwelleth in me, as the Canaanites among the Israelites, though they were put under tribute: dwells in me, and is like to dwell there, while I live.

(3.) His great comfort lay in Jesus Christ, ver. 25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. In the midst of his complaints he breaks out into praises. It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows, to be much in praise: many a poor drooping soul hath found it so. And in all our praises, this should be the burden of the song, blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

Who shall deliver me? saith he, ver. 24. as one at a loss for help. At length he finds an all-sufficient friend, even Jesus Christ. When we are under the sense of the remaining power of sin and corruption, we shall see reason to bless God, *through Christ*; for, as he is the Mediator of all our prayers, so he is of all our praises; to bless God *for Christ*; it is he that stands between us and the wrath due to us for this sin. If it were not for Christ, this iniquity that dwells in us would certainly be our ruin. He is our advocate with the Father, and through him God pities, and spares, and pardoneth, and lays not our iniquities to our charge.

It is Christ that has purchased deliverance for us in due time. Through Christ death will put an end to all these complaints, and waft us to an eternity, which we shall spend without sin or sigh. *Blessed be God that giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

C H A P. VIII.

The apostle having fully explained the doctrine of justification, and pressed the necessity of sanctification, in this chapter applies himself to the consolation of the Lord's people. Ministers are helpers of the joy of the saints. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, so runs our commission, Isa. xl. 1. *It is the will of God, that his people should be a comforted people. And we have here such a draught of the gospel-charter, such a display of the unspeakable privileges of true believers, as may furnish us with abundant matter for joy and peace in believing, that by all these immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lye, we might have strong consolation. And many of the people of God have accordingly found this chapter a well-spring of comfort to their souls, living and dying, and have sucked and been satisfied from these breasts of consolation, and with joy drawn water out of these wells of salvation. Three things in the chapter, 1. The particular instances of Christians' privileges, ver. 1—29. 2. The ground thereof laid in predestination, ver. 29, 30. 3. The apostle's triumph herein, in the name of all the saints, ver. 31, ad fin.*

1. **T**HERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5. For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6. For to be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace: 7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8. So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God. 9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The apostle here begins with one signal privilege of true Christians, and describes the character of such to whom it belongs.

Ver. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are*. This is his triumph after that melancholy complaint and conflict in the foregoing chapter; sin remaining, disturbing, vexing, but, blessed be God, not ruining. The complaint he takes to himself; but humbly transfers the comfort with himself to all true believers, who are all interested in it.

1. It is the unspeakable privilege and comfort of all those *that are in Christ Jesus*, that there is therefore now *no condemnation to them*. He doth not say, there is no accusation against them, for that there is; but the accusation is thrown out, and the indictment quashed. He doth not say, there is nothing in them that deserves condemnation, for that there is, and they see it, and own it, and mourn over it, and condemn themselves for it; but it shall not be their ruin. He doth not say, there is no cross, no affliction to them, nor no displeasure in the affliction, for that there may be; but no condemnation. They may be chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world. Now this arises from their being *in Christ Jesus*; by virtue of their union with him through faith, they are thus secured. They are in Christ Jesus, as in their city of refuge, and so are protected from the avenger of blood. He is their advocate, and brings them off. There is *therefore* no condemnation, because they are interested in the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to the law. In Christ, God doth not only not condemn them, but is well pleased with them, *Matth. xvii. 5*.

2. It is the undoubted character of all those who are so in Christ Jesus, as to be freed from condemnation, that *they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. Observe, The character is given from their *walk*, not from any one particular act, but from their course and way. And the great question is, What is the principle of the walk, the flesh or the spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace; which of these do we mind, for which of these do we make provision, by which of these are we governed, which of these do we take part with.

This great truth thus laid down, he illustrates in the following verses; and shews how we come by this great privilege, and how we may answer this character.

First, How we come by these privileges; the privilege of justification, that *there is no condemnation to us*; the privilege of sanctification, that *we walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh*, which is no less our privilege than it is our duty. How comes it about?

(1.) The law could not do it, ver. 3. it could neither justify nor sanctify, neither free us from the guilt, nor from the power of sin, having not the promises either of pardon or grace. The law made nothing perfect: *It was weak*: Some attempt the law made towards these blessed ends, but alas, it was weak, it could not accomplish them; yet that weakness was not through any defect in the law, but *through the flesh*, through the corruption of human nature, by which we became incapable either of being justified or sanctified by the law. We were become unable to keep the law, and in case of failure, the law as a covenant of works made no provision, and so left us as it found us. Or, understand it of the ceremonial law; that was a plaster not wide enough for the wound, that could never take away sin, *Heb. x. 4*.

(2.) The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus doth it, ver. 2. The covenant of grace made with us in Christ, is a treasury of merit and grace, and from thence we receive pardon and a new nature; *are freed from the law of sin and death*, i. e. both from the guilt and power of sin; from the curse of the law, and the conduct of the flesh. We are under another covenant, another master, another husband, under the *law of the Spirit*, the law that gives the Spirit, spiritual life to qualify us for eternal.

The foundation of this freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us, of which he speaks, *ver. 3. God sending his own son.* Observe, when the law failed, God provided another method. Christ comes to do that which the law could not do. Moses brought the children of Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died and left them there; but Joshua did that which Moses could not do, and put them in possession of Canaan. Thus what the law could not do, Christ did. The best exposition of this verse we have *Heb. x. 1-10.* To make the sense of the words clear, which in our translation is a little intricate, we may read it thus, with a little transposal, *for God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, that the* — *ver. 4. Observe,*

1. How Christ appeared; *in the likeness of sinful flesh.* Not sinful, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled; but in the likeness of that flesh which was sinful: He took upon him that nature which was corrupt, though perfectly abstracted from the corruptions of it. His being circumcised, redeemed, baptized with John's baptism, speak the likeness of sinful flesh. The bitings of the fiery serpents were cured by a serpent of brass, which had the shape, though free from the venom of the serpents that bit them. It was great condescension, that he that was God should be made in the likeness of *flesh*; but much greater, that he that was *holy* should be made in the likeness of *sinful flesh*.

And for sin, there the best Greek copies place the comma. God sent him, *εν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας,* and as a sacrifice for sin. The LXX call a sacrifice for sin no more but *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*; so Christ was a sacrifice; he was sent to be so, *Heb. ix. 26.*

2. What was done by this appearance of his: *Sin was condemned,* i. e. God did therein more than ever manifest his hatred of sin; and not only so, but for all that are Christ's both the damning and the domineering power of sin is broken and taken out of the way. He that is *condemned*, can neither *accuse*, nor *rule*, his testimony is null, and his authority null. Thus by Christ is sin condemned; though it live and remain, its life in the saints is still but like that of a condemned malefactor. It was by the condemning of sin that death was disarmed, and the devil, that had the power of death, destroyed. The condemning of sin saved the sinner from condemnation. Christ was *made sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. ult. and being so made, when he was condemned, sin was condemned *in the flesh* of Christ; condemned in the human nature: So was satisfaction made to divine justice, and way made for the salvation of the sinner.

3. The happy effect of this upon us: *Ver. 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.* Both in our justification and in our sanctification, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled. A righteousness of satisfaction for the breach of the law is fulfilled by the imputation of Christ's complete and perfect righteousness, which answers the utmost demands of the law, as the mercy-seat was as long and as broad as the ark. A righteousness of obedience to the commands of the law is fulfilled in us, when by the Spirit the law of love is written upon the heart, and that love is the fulfilling of the law, *Rom. xiii. 10.* Though the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by us, yet blessed be God it is fulfilled *in us*; there is that to be found upon and in all true believers, which answers the intention of the law. *Us who walk not.* There is the description of all those that are interested in this privilege, that they act from spiritual and not from carnal principles; as for others, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled upon them in their ruin. Now,

Secondly, Observe, how we may answer this character, *ver. 5, &c.*

(1.) By looking to our *minds.* How may we know, whether we are after the flesh; or after the Spirit? By examining what we mind, the *things of the flesh*, or the *things of the Spirit.* Carnal pleasure, worldly profit and honour, the things of sense and time, are the *things of the flesh*, which unregenerate people mind: The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity, are the *things of the Spirit*, which they that are after the Spirit do mind.

The man is, as the *mind* is. The mind is the forge of thoughts. *As he thinketh in his heart, so is he*, Prov. xxiii. 7. Which way do the thoughts move with most pleasure? On what do they dwell with most satisfaction? The mind is the seat of wisdom. Which way go the projects and contrivances? Whether are we more wise for the world, or for our souls? *προνοεῖ τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς*, they favour the things of the flesh; so the word is rendered, *Matth. xvi. 23.* It is a great matter what our *favour* is; what truths, what tidings, what comforts we do most relish, and are most agreeable to us.

Now, to caution us against this carnal-mindedness, he shews the great misery and malignity of it, and compares it with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual-mindedness.

1. It is *death*, *ver. 6.* It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is its alienation from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul doth consist. A carnal soul is a dead soul; dead, as a soul can die. She that *liveth in pleasure is dead*, 1 Tim. v. 6. not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death in-

cludes all misery; carnal souls are miserable souls. But to be *spiritually minded*, *φρόνημα τὸ πνευματικόν*, a spiritual favour, the wisdom that is from above, a principle of grace, is *life and peace*; it is the felicity and happiness of the soul. The life of the soul consists in its union with spiritual things by the mind. A sanctified soul is a living soul; and that life is *peace*, it is a very comfortable life: All the paths of spiritual wisdom are paths of peace: It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this. Spiritual-mindedness is eternal life and peace begun, and an assuring earnest of the perfection of it.

2. It is *enmity to God*, *ver. 7.* and this is worse than the former. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, that is bad; but this speaks him a devil of a man. It is not only an enemy, but enmity itself: It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God; it rebels against his authority, thwarts his design, opposeth his interest, spits in his face, spurns at his bowels. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. How should this humble us for, and warn us against, carnal-mindedness! Shall we harbour and indulge that, which is enmity to God our creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor? To prove this, he urgeth, that *it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light or darkness. The carnal man may, by the power of divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the *carnal mind* never can; that must be broken and expelled. See how wretchedly the corrupt will of man is enslaved to sin; as far as the carnal mind prevails, there is no inclination to the law of God; therefore wherever there is a change wrought, it is by the power of God's grace, not by the freedom of man's will.

From hence he infers, *ver. 8. They that are in the flesh, cannot please God.* They that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God; wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ the pleasing Mediator. The very *sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*, Prov. xv. 8. Pleasing God is our highest end, of which they that are in the flesh cannot but fall short: they cannot please him, nay they cannot but displease him.

We may know our state and character, (2.) By enquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or no. *Ver. 9. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.* This expresseth states and conditions of the soul vastly different. All the saints have *flesh* and *spirit* in them; but to be *in the flesh*, and to be *in the Spirit*, are contrary. It notes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles: As we say a man is *in love*, or *in drink*, i. e. overcome by them. Now the great question is, whether we are *in the flesh*, or *in the Spirit*; and how may we come to know it? Why, by enquiring whether the *Spirit of God dwell in us*. The Spirit dwelling in us, is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, for the indwelling is mutual, 1 John iv. 16. *Dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

The Spirit *visits* many that are unregenerate with his motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified he *dwells*; there he resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and hath the dominion. Shall we put this question to our own hearts, who dwells, who rules, who keeps house here? Which interest hath the ascendant?

To this he subjoins a general rule of trial; *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* To be Christ's, i. e. to be a Christian indeed, one of his children, his servants, his friends, in union with him, is a privilege and honour which many pretend to, that have no part nor lot in the matter. None are his but those that have his Spirit; that is, (1.) That are spirited as he was spirited: are meek, and lowly, and humble, and peaceable, and patient, and charitable as he was. We cannot tread in his steps unless we have his Spirit; the frame and disposition of our souls must be conformable to Christ's pattern. (2.) That are acted and guided by the holy Spirit of God, as a sanctifier, teacher, and comforter. Having the *Spirit of Christ* is the same with having the *Spirit of God to dwell in us*. But those two come much to one; for all that are acted by the Spirit of God as their rule, are conformable to the Spirit of Christ as their pattern.

Now this description of the character of those to whom belong this first privilege of freedom from condemnation, is to be applied to all the other privileges that follow.

10. And if Christ *be* in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. 11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12. Therefore brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,

God, they are the sons of God. 15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

In these verses the apostle represents two more excellent benefits, which belong to true believers.

1. *Life.* The happiness is not barely a negative happiness, not to be condemned; but it is positive, it is an advancement to a life that will be the unspeakable happiness of the man, *ver. 10, 11. If Christ be in you.* Observe, If the Spirit be in us, Christ is in us. He dwells in the heart by faith, *Eph. iii. 17.* Now we are here told what becomes of the bodies and souls of those, in whom Christ is.

(1.) We cannot say but that the *body is dead*; it is a frail, mortal, dying body, and it will be dead shortly; it is a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust: The life purchased and promised doth not immortalize the body in its present state.

It is *dead*, i. e. it is appointed to die, it is under a sentence of death: as we say, one that is condemned is a dead man. In the midst of life we are in death: be our bodies ever so strong and healthful, and handsome, they are *as good as dead*, *Heb. xi. 12.* and this *because of sin.* It is sin that kills the body. This effect the first threatening hath, *Gen. iii. 19. Dust thou art.* Methinks, were there no other argument, love to our bodies should make us hate sin, because it is such an enemy to our bodies. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin.

(2.) But *the spirit*, the precious soul, that is *life*; it is now spiritually alive, nay it is life. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the life of the saint lies in the soul, while the life of the sinner goes no farther than the body. When the body dies and returns to the dust, *the spirit is life*; not only living and immortal, but swallowed up of life. Death to the saints is but the freeing the heaven-born spirit from the clog and load of this body, that it may be fit to partake of eternal life. When Abraham was dead, yet God was the God of Abraham, for even then his spirit was life, *Matth. xxii. 31, 32.* see *Psal. xlix. 15.* And this *because of righteousness.* The righteousness of Christ imputed to them secures the soul, the better part, from death; the righteousness of Christ inherent in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and by God's ordination, at death elevates it, and improves it, and makes it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. The eternal life of the soul consists in the vision and fruition of God, and both assimilating, for which the soul is qualified by the righteousness of sanctification. I refer to *Psal. xvii. ult. I will behold thy face in righteousness.*

(3.) There is a life reserved too for the poor body at last: *He shall also quicken your mortal bodies*, *ver. 11.* The Lord is for the body; and though at death it is cast aside as a despised broken vessel, a vessel in which is no pleasure; yet God will have a desire to the work of his hands, *Job xiv. 15.* will remember his covenant with the dust, and will not lose a grain of it; but the body shall be re-united to the soul, and clothed with a glory agreeable to it: Vile bodies shall be new fashioned, *Phil. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 42.*

Two great assurances of the resurrection of the body are mentioned.

1. The resurrection of Christ. *He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken.* Christ rose as the head and first fruits, and forerunner of all the saints, *1 Cor. xv. 20.* The body of Christ lay in the grave under the sin of all the elect imputed, and broke through it: O grave then, where is thy victory? It is in the virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise.

2. The indwelling of the Spirit. The same Spirit that raiseth the soul now, will raise the body shortly; by *his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, *1 Cor. iii. 16.—vi. 19.* Now though these temples may be suffered for a while to lie in ruin, yet they shall be rebuilt again. The tabernacle of David that is fallen down, shall be repaired, whatever great mountains may be in the way. The Spirit breathing upon dead and dry bones, will make them live, and the saints even in their flesh shall see God.

From hence the apostle by the way infers, how much it is our duty to walk *not after the flesh*, but after the Spirit, *ver. 12, 13.* Let not our life be after the wills and motions of the flesh.

Two motives he mentions here.

(1.) *We are not debtors to the flesh*; neither by relation, gratitude, nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit or service to our carnal desires; we are indeed bound to clothe and feed, and take care of the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are not debtors to it; the flesh never did us so much kindness, as to oblige us to serve it. It is implied, that we are debtors to Christ, and to the Spirit: there we owe our all, all we have, and all we can do, by a thousand bonds and obligations. Being delivered from so great a death, by so great a ransom, we are deeply indebted to our Deliverer. See *1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.*

No. cvi.

(2.) Consider the consequences, what will be at the end of the way. Here is life and death, blessing and cursing set before us.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; i. e. die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying of the flesh, that is the ruin of souls; that is the second death. Dying indeed, is the soul's dying; the death of the saints is but a sleep.

But on the other hand, *ye shall live*, live and be happy to eternity; that is the true life: *If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body*, i. e. subdue and keep under all fleshly lusts and affections, deny yourselves in the pleasing and humouring of the body: And this *through the Spirit*; we cannot do it without the Spirit working it in us; and the Spirit will not do it without us doing our endeavour. So that, in a word, we are put upon this dilemma, either to displease the body, or destroy the soul.

2. The Spirit of adoption is another privilege belonging to those that are in Christ Jesus, *ver. 14, 15, 16.*

All that are Christ's are taken into the relation of children to God, *ver. 14.* Observe (1.) The property; they are *led by the Spirit of God*; as a scholar in his learning is led by his tutor, as a traveller in his journey is led by his guide, as a soldier in his engagements is led by his captain; not driven as beasts, but led as rational creatures; drawn with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that they are led by the Spirit of God: having submitted themselves in believing to his conduct, they do in their obedience follow that conduct, and are sweetly led into all truth and all duty. (2.) Their privilege; *they are the sons of God*; received into the number of God's children by adoption; owned and loved by him as his children.

And those that are the sons of God, have the Spirit,

1. To work in them the disposition of children, *ver. 15. Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.* Understand it, 1. Of that spirit of bondage, which the Old Testament church was under, by reason of the darkness and terror of that dispensation. The veil signified bondage, *2 Cor. iii. 15.* comp. *ver. 17.* the Spirit of adoption was not then so plentifully poured out as now; for the law opened the wound, but little of the remedy. Now you are not under that dispensation, you have not received that Spirit. 2. Of that spirit of bondage, which the saints were many of them themselves under at their conversion, under the convictions of sin and wrath set home by the Spirit; as they, *Acts ii. 37.* the jailor, *Acts xvi. 30.* Paul, *Acts ix. 6.* Then the Spirit himself was to the saints a spirit of bondage; but, faith the apostle, with you this is over. God, as a judge, says Dr. Manton, by the *spirit of bondage*, sends us to Christ as Mediator, and Christ as Mediator, by the *spirit of adoption*, sends us back again to God as a father. Though a child of God may come under fear of bondage again, and may be questioning his sonship; yet the blessed Spirit is not again a spirit of bondage, for then he would witness an untruth.

But you have received the Spirit of adoption. Men may give a charter of adoption; but it is God's prerogative, when he adopts, to give a Spirit of adoption; the nature of children. The Spirit of adoption works in the children of God a filial love to God as a father, a delight in him, and a dependence upon him as a father. A sanctified soul bears the image of God, as the child bears the image of the father.

Whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Praying is here called *crying*; which is not only an earnest, but a *natural* expression of desire; children that cannot speak, vent their desires by crying. Now, the Spirit teacheth us in prayer to come to God as a father, with a holy humble confidence, emboldening the soul in that duty.

Abba, Father. *Abba* is a Syriack word, signifying father, or my father; *πάτερ*, a Greek word: and why both, *Abba, Father*? Because Christ said so in prayer, *Mark xiv. 36. Abba, Father*: and we have received the Spirit of the Son. It notes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid upon the relation. Little children begging of their parents, can say little but father, father, and that is rhetorick enough. It also notes, that the adoption is common both to Jews and Gentiles; the Jews call him *Abba* in their language; the Greek may call him *πάτερ* in their language; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew.

2. To witness to the relation of children, *ver. 16.* The former is the work of the Spirit as a sanctifier, this as a comforter.

Beareth witness with our spirit. Many a man hath the witness of his own spirit to the goodness of his state, that hath not the concurring testimony of the Spirit. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom the God of heaven doth not speak peace: But they that are sanctified, have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits; which is to be understood not of any immediate extraordinary revelation, but an ordinary work of the Spirit, in and by the means of comfort speaking peace to the soul. This testimony is always agreeable to the written word, and is therefore always grounded upon sanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word. The Spirit witnesseth to none the privileges of children, that have not the nature and disposition of children.

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Now, to caution us against this carnal-mindedness, he shews the great misery and malignity of it, and compares it with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual-mindedness.

1. It is *death*, *ver. 6.* It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is its alienation from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul doth consist. A carnal soul is a dead soul; dead, as a soul can die. She that *liveth in pleasure is dead*, 1 Tim. v. 6. not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death in-

cludes all misery; carnal souls are miserable souls. But to be *spiritually minded*, *φρόνημα τὸ πνεύματος*, a spiritual favour, the wisdom that is from above, a principle of grace, is *life and peace*; it is the felicity and happiness of the soul. The life of the soul consists in its union with spiritual things by the mind. A sanctified soul is a living soul; and that life is *peace*, it is a very comfortable life: All the paths of spiritual wisdom are paths of peace: It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this. Spiritual-mindedness is eternal life and peace begun, and an assuring earnest of the perfection of it.

2. It is *enmity to God*, *ver. 7.* and this is worse than the former. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, that is bad; but this speaks him a devil of a man. It is not only an enemy, but enmity itself: It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God; it rebels against his authority, thwarts his design, opposeth his interest, spits in his face, spurns at his bowels. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. How should this humble us for, and warn us against, carnal-mindedness! Shall we harbour and indulge that, which is enmity to God our creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor? To prove this, he urgeth, that *it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light or darkness. The carnal man may, by the power of divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the *carnal mind* never can; that must be broken and expelled. See how wretchedly the corrupt will of man is enslaved to sin; as far as the carnal mind prevails, there is no inclination to the law of God; therefore wherever there is a change wrought, it is by the power of God's grace, not by the freedom of man's will.

From hence he infers, *ver. 8. They that are in the flesh, cannot please God.* They that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God; wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ the pleasing Mediator. The very *sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*, *Prov. xv. 8.* Pleasing God is our highest end, of which they that are in the flesh cannot but fall short: they cannot please him, nay they cannot but displease him.

We may know our state and character, (2.) By enquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or no. *Ver. 9. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.* This expresseth states and conditions of the soul vastly different. All the saints have *flesh* and *spirit* in them; but to be *in the flesh*, and to be *in the Spirit*, are contrary. It notes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles: As we say a man is *in love*, or *in drink*, i. e. overcome by them. Now the great question is, whether we are *in the flesh*, or *in the Spirit*; and how may we come to know it? Why, by enquiring whether the *Spirit of God dwell in us*. The Spirit dwelling in us, is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, for the indwelling is mutual, 1 John iv. 16. *Dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

The Spirit *visits* many that are unregenerate with his motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified he *dwells*; there he resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and hath the dominion. Shall we put this question to our own hearts, who dwells, who rules, who keeps house here? Which interest hath the ascendant?

To this he subjoins a general rule of trial; *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* To be Christ's, i. e. to be a Christian indeed, one of his children, his servants, his friends, in union with him, is a privilege and honour which many pretend to, that have no part nor lot in the matter. None are his but those that have his Spirit; that is, (1.) That are spirited as he was spirited: are meek, and lowly, and humble, and peaceable, and patient, and charitable as he was. We cannot tread in his steps unless we have his Spirit; the frame and disposition of our souls must be conformable to Christ's pattern. (2.) That are acted and guided by the holy Spirit of God, as a sanctifier, teacher, and comforter. Having the *Spirit of Christ* is the same with having the *Spirit of God to dwell in us*. But those two come much to one; for all that are acted by the Spirit of God as their rule, are conformable to the Spirit of Christ as their pattern.

Now this description of the character of those to whom belong this first privilege of freedom from condemnation, is to be applied to all the other privileges that follow.

10. And if Christ *be* in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. 11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12. Therefore brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,

God, they are the sons of God. 15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

In these verses the apostle represents two more excellent benefits, which belong to true believers.

1. *Life.* The happiness is not barely a negative happiness, not to be condemned; but it is positive, it is an advancement to a life that will be the unspeakable happiness of the man, *ver. 10, 11. If Christ be in you.* Observe, If the Spirit be in us, Christ is in us. He dwells in the heart by faith, *Eph. iii. 17.* Now we are here told what becomes of the bodies and souls of those, in whom Christ is.

(1.) We cannot say but that the *body is dead*; it is a frail, mortal, dying body, and it will be dead shortly; it is a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust: The life purchased and promised doth not immortalize the body in its present state.

It is *dead*, i. e. it is appointed to die, it is under a sentence of death: as we say, one that is condemned is a dead man. In the midst of life we are in death: be our bodies ever so strong and healthful, and handsome, they are *as good as dead*, *Heb. xi. 12.* and this *because of sin.* It is sin that kills the body. This effect the first threatening hath, *Gen. iii. 19. Dust thou art.* Methinks, were there no other argument, love to our bodies should make us hate sin, because it is such an enemy to our bodies. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin.

(2.) But *the spirit*, the precious soul, that is *life*; it is now spiritually alive, nay it is life. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the life of the saint lies in the soul, while the life of the sinner goes no farther than the body. When the body dies and returns to the dust, *the spirit is life*; not only living and immortal, but swallowed up of life. Death to the saints is but the freeing the heaven-born spirit from the clog and load of this body, that it may be fit to partake of eternal life. When Abraham was dead, yet God was the God of Abraham, for even then his spirit was life, *Matth. xxii. 31, 32.* see *Psal. xlix. 15.* And this *because of righteousness.* The righteousness of Christ imputed to them secures the soul, the better part, from death; the righteousness of Christ inherent in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and by God's ordination, at death elevates it, and improves it, and makes it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. The eternal life of the soul consists in the vision and fruition of God, and both assimilating, for which the soul is qualified by the righteousness of sanctification. I refer to *Psal. xvii. ult. I will behold thy face in righteousness.*

(3.) There is a life reserved too for the poor body at last: *He shall also quicken your mortal bodies*, *ver. 11.* The Lord is for the body; and though at death it is cast aside as a despised broken vessel, a vessel in which is no pleasure; yet God will have a desire to the work of his hands, *Job xiv. 15.* will remember his covenant with the dust, and will not lose a grain of it; but the body shall be re-united to the soul, and clothed with a glory agreeable to it: Vile bodies shall be new fashioned, *Phil. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 42.*

Two great assurances of the resurrection of the body are mentioned.

1. The resurrection of Christ. *He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken.* Christ rose as the head and first fruits, and forerunner of all the saints, *1 Cor. xv. 20.* The body of Christ lay in the grave under the sin of all the elect imputed, and broke through it: O grave then, where is thy victory? It is in the virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise.

2. The indwelling of the Spirit. The same Spirit that raiseth the soul now, will raise the body shortly; by *his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, *1 Cor. iii. 16.—vi. 19.* Now though these temples may be suffered for a while to lie in ruin, yet they shall be rebuilt again. The tabernacle of David that is fallen down, shall be repaired, whatever great mountains may be in the way. The Spirit breathing upon dead and dry bones, will make them live, and the saints even in their flesh shall see God.

From hence the apostle by the way infers, how much it is our duty to walk *not after the flesh*, but after the Spirit, *ver. 12, 13.* Let not our life be after the wills and motions of the flesh.

Two motives he mentions here.

(1.) *We are not debtors to the flesh*; neither by relation, gratitude, nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit or service to our carnal desires; we are indeed bound to clothe and feed, and take care of the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are not debtors to it; the flesh never did us so much kindness, as to oblige us to serve it. It is implied, that we are debtors to Christ, and to the Spirit: there we owe our all, all we have, and all we can do, by a thousand bonds and obligations. Being delivered from so great a death, by so great a ransom, we are deeply indebted to our Deliverer. See *1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.*

No. cvi.

(2.) Consider the consequences, what will be at the end of the way. Here is life and death, blessing and cursing set before us.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; i. e. die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying of the flesh, that is the ruin of souls; that is the second death. Dying indeed, is the soul's dying; the death of the saints is but a sleep.

But on the other hand, *ye shall live*, live and be happy to eternity; that is the true life: *If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body*, i. e. subdue and keep under all fleshly lusts and affections, deny yourselves in the pleasing and humouring of the body: And this *through the Spirit*; we cannot do it without the Spirit working it in us; and the Spirit will not do it without us doing our endeavour. So that, in a word, we are put upon this dilemma, either to displease the body, or destroy the soul.

2. The Spirit of adoption is another privilege belonging to those that are in Christ Jesus, *ver. 14, 15, 16.*

All that are Christ's are taken into the relation of children to God, *ver. 14.* Observe (1.) The property; they are *led by the Spirit of God*; as a scholar in his learning is led by his tutor, as a traveller in his journey is led by his guide, as a soldier in his engagements is led by his captain; not driven as beasts, but led as rational creatures; drawn with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that they are led by the Spirit of God: having submitted themselves in believing to his conduct, they do in their obedience follow that conduct, and are sweetly led into all truth and all duty. (2.) Their privilege; *they are the sons of God*; received into the number of God's children by adoption; owned and loved by him as his children.

And those that are the sons of God, have the Spirit,

1. To work in them the disposition of children, *ver. 15. Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.* Understand it, 1. Of that spirit of bondage, which the Old Testament church was under, by reason of the darkness and terror of that dispensation. The veil signified bondage, *2 Cor. iii. 15.* comp. *ver. 17.* the Spirit of adoption was not then so plentifully poured out as now; for the law opened the wound, but little of the remedy. Now you are not under that dispensation, you have not received that Spirit. 2. Of that spirit of bondage, which the saints were many of them themselves under at their conversion, under the convictions of sin and wrath set home by the Spirit; as they, *Acts ii. 37.* the jailor, *Acts xvi. 30.* Paul, *Acts ix. 6.* Then the Spirit himself was to the saints a spirit of bondage; but, faith the apostle, with you this is over. God, as a judge, says Dr. Manton, by the *spirit of bondage*, sends us to Christ as Mediator, and Christ as Mediator, by the *spirit of adoption*, sends us back again to God as a father. Though a child of God may come under fear of bondage again, and may be questioning his sonship; yet the blessed Spirit is not again a spirit of bondage, for then he would witness an untruth.

But you have received the Spirit of adoption. Men may give a charter of adoption; but it is God's prerogative, when he adopts, to give a Spirit of adoption; the nature of children. The Spirit of adoption works in the children of God a filial love to God as a father, a delight in him, and a dependence upon him as a father. A sanctified soul bears the image of God, as the child bears the image of the father.

Whereby we cry, *Abba, Father.* Praying is here called *crying*; which is not only an earnest, but a *natural* expression of desire; children that cannot speak, vent their desires by crying. Now, the Spirit teacheth us in prayer to come to God as a father, with a holy humble confidence, emboldening the soul in that duty.

Abba, Father. *Abba* is a Syriack word, signifying father, or my father; *πάτερ*, a Greek word: and why both, *Abba, Father*? Because Christ said so in prayer, *Mark xiv. 36. Abba, Father*: and we have received the Spirit of the Son. It notes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid upon the relation. Little children begging of their parents, can say little but father, father, and that is rhetorick enough. It also notes, that the adoption is common both to Jews and Gentiles; the Jews call him *Abba* in their language; the Greek may call him *πάτερ* in their language; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew.

2. To witness to the relation of children, *ver. 16.* The former is the work of the Spirit as a sanctifier, this as a comforter.

Beareth witness with our spirit. Many a man hath the witness of his own spirit to the goodness of his state, that hath not the concurring testimony of the Spirit. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom the God of heaven doth not speak peace: But they that are sanctified, have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits; which is to be understood not of any immediate extraordinary revelation, but an ordinary work of the Spirit, in and by the means of comfort speaking peace to the soul. This testimony is always agreeable to the written word, and is therefore always grounded upon sanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word. The Spirit witnesseth to none the privileges of children, that have not the nature and disposition of children.

17. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18. For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope: 21. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now: 23. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24. For we are saved by hope: But hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

In these words, the apostle describes a *fourth* illustrious branch of the happiness of believers, viz. a title to the future glory. This is fitly annexed to our sonship; for as the adoption of sons entitles us to, so the disposition of sons fits and prepares us for, that glory.

If children, then heirs, ver. 17. In earthly inheritances this rule doth not hold, only the first-born are heirs; but the church is a church of first-born, for they are all heirs. Heaven is an inheritance that all the saints are heirs to. They do not come to it as purchasers, by any merit or procurement of their own; but as heirs, purely by the act of God; for *God makes heirs*. The saints are heirs, though in this world they are heirs under age: see *Gal. iv. 1, 2*. Their present state is a state of education, and preparation for the inheritance. How comfortable should this be to all the children of God, how little soever they have in possession, that being heirs they have enough in reversion?

But the honour and happiness of an heir lies in the value and worth of that which he is heir to; we read of those that inherit the wind; and therefore we have here an abstract of the premises.

1. *Heirs of God*. The Lord himself is the portion of the saints inheritance, *Psal. xvi. 5*. A goodly heritage, ver. 6. The saints are spiritual priests, that have the Lord for their inheritance, *Num. xviii. 20*. The vision of God, and the fruition of God make up the inheritance the saints are heirs to. God himself will be with them, and will be their God, *Rev. xxi. 3*.

2. *Joint-heirs with Christ*. Christ as Mediator is said to be the heir of all things, *Heb. i. 2*. and true believers, by virtue of their union with him, shall inherit all things, *Rev. xxi. 7*. they that now partake of the Spirit of Christ as his brethren, shall as his brethren partake of his glory, *John xvii. 24*. shall sit down with him upon his throne, *Rev. iii. 21*. Lord, what is man that thou shouldest thus magnify him! Now, this future glory is further spoken of, as the reward of present sufferings, and as the accomplishment of present hopes.

First, As the reward of the saints present sufferings, and it is a rich reward. *If so be that we suffer with him*, ver. 17. or, forasmuch as we suffer with him. The state of the church in this world always is, but was then especially an afflicted state; to be a Christian, was certainly to be a sufferer. Now to comfort them in reference to those sufferings, he tells them they suffered with Christ, for his sake, for his honour, and for the testimony of a good conscience; and we shall be glorified with him. Those that suffered with David in his persecuted state, were advanced by him, and with him, when he came to the crown; see *2 Tim. ii. 12*. See the gains of suffering for Christ; though we may be losers for him, we shall not, we cannot be losers by him in the end. This the gospel is filled with the assurances of. Now, that suffering saints may have strong supports and consolations from their hopes of heaven, he holds the balance, ver. 18. in a comparison between the two; which is observable.

(1.) In one scale he puts the sufferings of this present time. The sufferings of the saints are but sufferings of this present time, strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time, *2 Cor. iv. 17*. light affliction, and but for a moment. So that on the sufferings he writes *tekēl*, weighed in the balance, and found light.

(2.) In the other scale he puts the glory; and finds that a weight, an exceeding and eternal weight. *Glory that shall be revealed*. In our present state we come short, not only in the enjoyment, but in the knowledge of that glory, *1 Cor. ii. 9*. *1 John iii. 2*. it shall be revealed. It surpasseth all that we have yet seen or known: present vouchsafements are sweet and precious, very precious, very sweet; but there is something to come, something behind the curtain, that will outshine all. *Shall be revealed in us*; not only revealed to us to be seen, but revealed in us to be enjoyed.

The kingdom of God is within you, and will be so to eternity.

(3.) He determines their sufferings *not worthy to be compared* with the glory; *ἐκ ἀξίας πρὸς τὴν δόξαν*. They cannot merit that glory; and if suffering for Christ will not merit, much less will doing. They should not all deter and frighten us from the diligent and earnest pursuit of that glory. The sufferings are small and short, and concern the body only; but the glory is rich and great, and concerns the soul, and is eternal.

This he reckons. *I reckon, λογίζομαι*. It is not a rash and sudden determination, but the product of a very serious and deliberate consideration. He had reasoned the case within himself, weighed the arguments on both sides, and thus at last resolves the point. O how vastly different is the sentence of the word, and the sentiment of the world concerning the sufferings of this present time!

I reckon, as an arithmetician that is balancing an account; he first sums up what is disbursed for Christ in the sufferings of this present time, and finds they come to very little; he then sums up what is secured to us by Christ in the glory that shall be revealed, and that he finds an infinite sum, transcending all conception, the disbursement abundantly made up, and the losses infinitely counterbalanced: And who would be afraid then to suffer for Christ, who as he is beforehand with us in suffering, so he will not be behind hand with us in recompence?

Now Paul was a competent judge of this point, as ever any mere man was. He could reckon not by art only, but by experience; for he knew both. He knew what the sufferings of this present time were; see *2 Cor. xi. 23—28*. He knew what the glory of heaven is; see *2 Cor. xii. 3, 4*. And upon the view of both, he gives this judgment here. Nothing like a believing view of the glory which shall be revealed, to support and bear up the spirit under all the sufferings of this present time. The reproach of Christ appears riches to those, that have respect to the recompence of reward, *Heb. xi. 26*.

Secondly, As the accomplishment of the saints present hopes and expectations, ver. 19, &c. As the saints are suffering for it, so they are waiting for it. Heaven is therefore sure; for God, by his Spirit, would not raise and encourage those hopes only to defeat and disappoint them; he will establish that word unto his servants, on which he has caused them to hope, *Psal. cxix. 49*. and heaven is therefore sweet; for if hope deferred makes the heart sick, surely when the desire comes, it will be a tree of life, *Prov. xiii. 12*.

Now he observes an expectation of this glory;

1. In the creatures, ver. 19, 20, 21, 22. That must needs be a great transcendent glory, which all the creatures are so earnestly expecting, and longing for. This observation in these verses has some difficulty in it, which puzzles interpreters a little, and the more because it is a remark not made in any other scripture, with which it might be compared.

By the creature here we understand, not, as some do, the Gentile world, and their expectation of Christ and the gospel; which is an exposition very foreign and forced: But the whole frame of nature, especially that of this lower world; the whole creation, the compages of inanimate and sensible creatures; which because of their harmony and mutual dependence, and because they all constitute and make up one world, are spoken of in the singular number, as *the creature*. The sense of the apostle, in these four verses, we may take in these observations:

(1.) That there is a present vanity, which the creature, by reason of the sin of man is made subject to, ver. 20. When man sinned, the ground was cursed for man's sake, and with it all the creatures (especially of this lower world where our acquaintance lies) became subject to that curse; became mutable and mortal. Under the bondage of corruption, ver. 21. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which the creature has contracted by the fall of man: the creation is sullied and stained, much of the beauty of the world gone. There is an enmity of one creature to another; they are all subject to continual alteration and decay of the individuals, liable to the strokes of God's judgments upon man. When the world was drowned, and almost all the creatures in it, surely then it was subject to vanity indeed. The whole species of creatures is designed for, and is hastening to, a total dissolution by fire. And it is not the least part of their vanity and bondage, that they are used, or abused rather by men as instruments of sin. The creatures are often abused to the dishonour of their Creator; the hurt of his children, or the service of his enemies. When the creatures are made the food and fuel of our lusts, they are subject to vanity, they are captivated by the law of sin.

And this, *not willingly*, not of their own choice; all the creatures desire their own perfection and consummation. When they are made instruments of sin, it is not willingly. Or, they are thus captivated, not for any sin of their own, which they had committed, but for man's sin: By reason of him who hath subjected the same. Adam did it meritoriously; the creatures being delivered to him, when he by sin delivered himself, he delivered them likewise into the bondage of corruption. God did it judicially; he passed a sentence upon the creatures for the sin of man, by which they became subject. And this yoke (poor creatures) they bear in hope, that it will not be so always. *Ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ὄντι*, &c. in hope that

that the creature itself; so many Greek copies join the words. We have reason to pity the poor creatures, that for our sin are become subject to vanity.

(2.) That the creatures *groan and travel in pain* together under this *vanity and corruption*, ver. 22. It is a figurative expression. Sin is a burden to the whole creation; the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ, set the earth a quaking under them. The idols were a *burden to the weary beast*, Isa. xlv. 1. There is a general outcry of the whole creation against the sin of man; the stone crieth out of the wall, *Hab. ii. 11.* the land cries, *Job xxxi. 38.*

(3.) That the creature, that is now thus burdened, shall, at the time of the restitution of all things, be *delivered from this bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God*, ver. 21. *i. e.* they shall no more be subject to vanity and corruption, and the other fruits of the curse; but, on the contrary, this lower world shall be renewed; when there will be new heavens, there will be a new earth, *2 Pet. iii. 13.* *Rev. xxi. 1.* and there shall be a glory conferred upon all the creatures, which shall be (in the proportion of their natures) as suitable, and as great an advancement, as the glory of the children of God shall be to them. The fire at the last day shall be a refining, not a destroying, annihilating fire. What comes of the souls of brutes, that go downwards, none can tell: But it should seem by the scripture there will be some kind of restoration of them. And if it be objected, what use will they be of to glorified saints, we may suppose them of as much use as they were to Adam in innocency; and if it be only to illustrate the wisdom, power, and goodness of their Creator, that is enough. Compare with this *Psal. xcvi. 10—13.—xcviii. 7—9.* *Let the heavens rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh.*

(4.) That the creature doth therefore earnestly expect and wait for the *manifestation of the children of God*, ver. 19. Observe, at the second coming of Christ there will be a manifestation of the children of God. Now the saints are God's hidden ones, the wheat seems lost in a heap of chaff; but then they shall be manifested. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, *1 John iii. 2.* but then the glory shall be revealed. The children of God shall appear in their own colours. And this redemption of the creature is reserved till then; for as it was with man and for man they fell under the curse, so with man and for man they shall be delivered. All the curse and filth, that now adheres to the creature, shall be done away then, when those that have suffered with Christ upon earth, shall reign with him upon the earth. This the whole creation looks and longs for; and it may serve as a reason, why now a good man should be merciful to his beast.

2. In the saints that are new creatures, ver. 23, 24, 25. Observe,

(1.) The grounds of this expectation in the saints. It is our having received *the first fruits of the Spirit*; which doth both quicken our desires, and encourage our hopes, and both ways raiseth our expectations. The first fruits did both sanctify and insure the lump. Grace is the first fruits of glory, it is glory begun. We having received such clusters in this wilderness, cannot but long for the full vintage in the heavenly Canaan. *Not only they*; not only the creatures, who are not capable of such a happiness as the first fruits of the Spirit; but even we that have such present rich receivings, yet cannot but long for something more and greater. In having the first fruits of the Spirit we have that which is very precious; but we have not all we would have.

We *groan within ourselves*; which notes the strength and secrecy of these desires: Not making a loud noise, as the hypocrites howling upon the bed for corn and wine, but with silent groans, which pierce heaven soonest of all. Or, we *groan among our selves*. It is the unanimous vote, the joint desire of the whole church, all agree in this; *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* The groaning notes a very earnest and importunate desire, the soul pained with the delay. Present receivings and comforts are consistent with a great many groans; not as the pangs of one dying, but as the throws of a woman in travel; groans that are symptoms of life, not of death.

(2.) The object of this expectation. What is it we are thus desiring and waiting for? What would we have? *The adoption*, to wit, *the redemption of our body*. Though the soul be the principal part of the man, yet the Lord hath declared himself for the body also, and hath provided a great deal of honour and happiness for the body. The resurrection is here called the redemption of the body: It shall then be rescued from the power of death and the grave, and the bondage of corruption; and though a vile body, yet it shall be refined and beautified, and made like that glorious body of Christ, *Phil. iii. 21.* *1 Cor. xv. 42.*

This is called *the adoption*. (1.) It is the *adoption manifested* before all the world, angels and men. Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear, the honour is now clouded; but then God will publicly own all his children. The deed of adoption, which is now written, signed and sealed, will then be recognized, proclaimed, and published. As Christ was, so the saints will be declared to be sons of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, *Rom. i. 4.* It will then be put past dispute. (2.) It is the *adoption perfected* and completed. The children of God have bodies as well as souls; and till those bodies are brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, the adoption is not

perfect: But then it will be complete, when the captain of our salvation shall bring the many sons to glory, *Heb. ii. 10.*

This is that which we expect, which our flesh doth rest in hope of, *Psal. xvi. 9, 10.* All the days of our appointed time, we are waiting till this change comes, when he shall call and we shall answer, and he will have a desire to the work of his hands, *Job xiv. 14, 15.*

(3.) The agreeableness of this to our present state, ver. 24, 25. Our happiness is not in present possession; *we are saved by hope*. In this, as in other things, God hath made our present state a state of trial and probation, that our reward is out of sight. Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust. It is acknowledged, that one of the principal graces of a Christian, is *hope*, *1 Cor. xiii. ult.* which necessarily implies a good thing to come, which is the object of that hope. Faith respects the promise, hope the thing promised. Faith is the evidence, hope the expectation of things not seen. Faith is the mother of hope.

We do with patience wait. In hoping for this glory, we have need of patience, to bear the sufferings we meet with in the way to it, and the delays of it. Our way is rough and long; but he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; and therefore though he seem to tarry, it becomes us to wait for him, ver. 26, 27.

26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God. 28. And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

The apostle here suggests two privileges more, which true Christians are entitled to.

1. The help of the Spirit in prayer. While we are in this world, hoping and waiting for what we see not, we must be praying. Hope supposes desire, and that desire offered up to God is prayer; we groan. Now observe,

First, Our weakness in prayer. *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* (1.) As to the matter of our requests, we know not what to ask. We are not competent judges of our own condition, *Who knows what is good for a man in this life?* *Eccl. vi. ult.* We are short-sighted, and very much biassed in favour of the flesh, and apt to separate the end from the way. *Ye know not what ye ask*, *Matth. xx. 22.* We are like foolish children, that are ready to cry for fruit before it is ripe, and fit for them; see *Luk. ix. 54, 55.* (2.) As to the manner, we know not how to pray as we ought. It is not enough, that we do that which is good, but we must do it well; seek in a due order: and here we are often at a loss; graces are weak, affections cold, thoughts wandring; and it is not always easy to *find the heart to pray*, *2 Sam. vii. 27.* The apostle speaks of this in the first person, *we know not.* He puts himself among the rest. Folly and weakness, and distraction in prayer, is that which all the saints are complaining of. If so great a saint as Paul knew not what to pray for, what little reason have we to go forth about that duty in our own strength?

Secondly, The assistances which the Spirit gives us in that duty. He *helps our infirmities*; meant especially of our praying infirmities, which most easily beset us in that duty, against which the Spirit helps. The Spirit in the word helps, many rules and promises there are in the word for our help; the Spirit in the heart helps, dwelling in us, working in us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication. Especially the infirmities we are under, when we are in a suffering state, when our faith is most apt to fail; for this end the Holy Ghost was poured out. *Helpeth, συναντιλαμβάνει*; heaves with us, over against us, helps as we help one that would lift up a burden, by lifting over-against him at the other end; helps with us, *i. e.* with us doing our endeavour, putting forth the strength we have. We must not sit still, and expect that the Spirit should do all; when the Spirit goes before us, we must bestir ourselves. We cannot without God, and he will not without us.

What help? why, the *Spirit itself maketh intercession for us*, dictates our requests, indites our petitions, draws up our plea for us. Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts; so graciously hath God provided for the encouragement of the praying remnant. The Spirit, as an enlightning Spirit, teacheth us what to pray for; as a sanctifying Spirit, works and excites praying graces; as a comforting Spirit, silenceth our fears, and helps us over all our discouragements. The holy Spirit is the spring of all our desires and breathings towards God. Now, this intercession which the Spirit makes, is,

(2.) *With groanings that cannot be uttered.* The strength and fervency of those desires, which the holy Spirit works, is hereby intimated. There may be praying in the Spirit, where there is not

not a word spoken ; as Moses prayed, *Exod. xiv. 15.* and Hannah, *1 Sam. i. 13.*

It is not the rhetorick and eloquence, but the faith and fervency of our prayers, that the Spirit works as an intercessor in us. *Cannot be uttered*, they are so confused, the soul is in such a hurry with temptations and troubles, we know not what to say, nor how to express ourselves. Here is the Spirit interceding with groans that cannot be uttered. When we can but cry *Abba, Father*, and refer ourselves to him with a holy humble boldness, this is the work of the Spirit.

(2.) *According to the will of God*, ver. 27. The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word. Those desires that are contrary to the will of God, do not come from the Spirit. The Spirit interceding in us evermore melts our wills into the will of God. *Not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Thirdly, The sure success of these intercessions. *He that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit*, ver. 27.

To an hypocrite, all whose religion lies in his tongue, nothing is more dreadful, than that God searcheth the heart, and sees through all his disguises. To a sincere Christian, that makes heart-work of his duty, nothing is more comfortable than that God searcheth the heart, for then he will hear and answer those desires, which we want words to express. He knows *what we have need of before we ask*, Matth. vi. 8. He knows what is the mind of his own Spirit in us. And as he always hears the Son interceding for us, so he always hears the Spirit interceding in us, because his intercession is according to the will of God.

What could have been done more for the comfort of the Lord's people in all their addresses to God? Christ had said, whatever you ask the Father according to his will, he will give it you. But how shall we learn to ask according to his will? Why the Spirit will teach us that: Therefore it is, that the seed of Jacob never seek in vain.

2. The concurrence of all providences for the good of those that are Christ's, ver. 28. It might be objected, that notwithstanding all these privileges, we see believers compassed about with manifold afflictions; though the Spirit makes intercession for them, yet their troubles are continued. It is very true; but in this the Spirit's intercession is always effectual, that however it goes with them, all this is working together for their good. Observe here,

First, The character of the saints, who are interested in this privilege; they are here described by such properties as are common to all that are truly sanctified.

(1.) *They love God*. This includes all the out-goings of the soul's affections towards God as the chiefest good and highest end. It is our love to God that makes every providence sweet, and therefore profitable. Those that love God make the best of all he doth, and take all in good part.

(2.) *They are the called according to his purpose*; effectually called according to the eternal purpose. The call is effectual, not according to any merit or desert of ours, but according to God's own gracious purpose.

Secondly, The privilege of the saints, that *all things work together for good to them*, i. e. all the providences of God that are concerning them. All that God performs, he *performs for them*, Psal. lviii. 2. Their sins are not of his performing, therefore not intended here, though his permitting of sin is made to work for their good, *2 Chron. xxxii. 31.* But all the providences of God are theirs; merciful providences, afflicting providences, personal, publick; they are all for good; perhaps for temporal good, as Joseph's troubles; however for spiritual and eternal good. That is good for them, that doth their souls good. Either directly or indirectly every providence hath a tendency to the spiritual good of those that love God; breaking them off from sin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, fitting them for heaven.

Work together. They work, as physick works upon the body, various ways, according to the intention of the physician; but all for the patient's good. *They work together*, as several ingredients in a medicine concur to answer the intention. God hath set the one over against the other, *Ecccl. vii. 14.* *συνεργεῖ*, a verb singular with a noun plural, noting the harmony of providence, and its uniform designs, all the wheels as one wheel, *Ezek. x. 14.*

He worketh all things together for good; so some read it: It is not from any specifick quality in the providences themselves, but from the power and grace of God working in, and with, and by these providences.

All this *we know*; know it for a certainty, from the word of God, from our own experience, and from the experience of all the saints.

29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. 30. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The apostle having reckoned up so many ingredients of the happiness of true believers, comes here to represent the ground of them all, which he lays in predestination. These precious privileges are conveyed to us by the charter of the covenant, but they are founded in the counsel of God, which infallibly secures the event. That Jesus Christ the purchaser might not labour in vain, nor spend his strength and life for nought and in vain, there is a remnant given him, a seed that he shall see, so that the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. For the explanation of which, he here sets before us the order of the causes of our salvation, a golden chain, which cannot be broken. There are four links of it.

First, *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*: i. e. All that God designed for glory and happiness as the end, he decreed to grace and holiness as the way. Not, whom he did foreknow to be holy, them he predestinated to be so. The counsels and decrees of God do not truckle to the frail and fickle will of men; no, God's foreknowledge of the saints is the same with that *everlasting love* where, with he is said to have loved them, *Jer. xxxi. 3.* God's knowing his people is the same with his owning of them, *Psal. i. ult. Job. x. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 19. see Rom. xi. 2.* Words of knowledge often in scripture note affection; so here. *Elect according to the free knowledge of God*, *1 Pet. i. 2.* And the same word is rendered *fore-ordained*, *1 Pet. i. 20.* *Whom he did fore-know*, i. e. whom he designed for his friends and favourites; *I know thee by name*, saith God to Moses, *Exod. xxxiii. 12.* Now those whom God thus foreknew he did *predestinate to be conformed to Christ*.

(1.) Holiness consists in our conformity to the image of Christ. That takes in the whole of sanctification, of which Christ is the great pattern and samplar: To be spirited as Christ was, to walk and live as Christ did, to bear our sufferings patiently as Christ did. Christ is the express image of his Father, and the saints are conformed to the image of Christ. Thus it is by the mediation and interposal of Christ, that we have God's love restored to us, and God's likeness renewed upon us, in which two things consist the happiness of man.

(2.) All that God hath from eternity foreknown with favour, he hath predestinated to this conformity. It is not we that can conform our selves to Christ; our giving of ourselves to Christ takes rise in God's giving of us to him; and in giving us to him, he predestinated us to be conformable to his image. It is a mere cavil therefore to call the doctrine of election, a licentious doctrine; and to argue, that it gives encouragement to sin, as if the end were separated from the way, and happiness from holiness. None can know their election, but by their conformity to the image of Christ; for all that are chosen are chosen to sanctification, *2 Thess. ii. 13.* and surely it cannot be a temptation to any to be conformed to the world, to believe that they were predestinated to be conformed to Christ.

(3.) That which is herein chiefly designed, is the honour of Jesus Christ, that he might be the *first-born among many brethren*; i. e. that Christ might have the honour of being the great pattern, as well as the great prince; and in this, as in other things, might have preheminance. It was in the first-born that all the children were dedicated to God under the law; the first-born was the head of the family, on whom all the rest did depend: now in the family of the saints, Christ must have the honour of being the first-born. And, blessed be God, that there are *many brethren*; though they seem but a few in one place, at one time, yet when they come all together, they will be a great many.

There is therefore a certain number *predestinated*, that the end of Christ's undertaking might be infallibly secured. Had the event been left at uncertainties, in the divine counsels, to depend upon the contingent turn of man's will, Christ might have been the first-born among but few or no brethren; a captain without soldiers, and a prince without subjects: to prevent which, and to secure to him *many brethren*, the decree is absolute, the thing ascertained, that he might be sure to *see his seed*; there is a remnant predestinated to be conformed to his image; which decree will certainly have its accomplishment in the holiness and happiness of that chosen race; and so, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness, Christ will be the first-born among many, very many brethren.

Secondly, *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called*. Not only with the external call; so many are called, that were not chosen, Matth. xx. 16.—xxii. 14. but with the internal and effectual call. The former comes to the ear only, but this to the heart. All that God did from eternity predestinate to grace and glory, he doth, in the fulness of time, effectually call. The call is then effectual, when we come at the call; and we then come at the call, when the Spirit draws us, convinceth the conscience of guilt and wrath, enlightneth the understanding, boweth the will, persuades and enables us to embrace Christ in the promises, makes us willing in the day of his power. It is an effectual call from self and earth, to God and Christ and heaven as our end; from sin and vanity, to grace and holiness, and seriousness as our way. This is the gospel call.

Them he called, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, we are called to that, to which we were chosen. So that

that the only way to make our election sure, is to make sure our calling, 2 *Pet.* i. 10.

Thirdly, *Whom he called, them he also justified.* All that are effectually called, are justified; absolved from guilt, and accepted as righteous through Jesus Christ. They are *reſti in curia*; no sin that ever they have been guilty of, shall come against them to condemn them. The book is crossed, the bond cancelled, the judgment vacated, the attainder reversed; and they are no longer dealt with as criminals, but owned and loved as friends and favourites. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is thus forgiven. None are thus justified, but those that are effectually called. Those that stand it out against the gospel call, abide under guilt and wrath.

Fourthly, *Whom he justified, them he also glorified.* The power of corruption being broken in effectual calling, and the guilt of sin removed in justification, all that which hinders is taken out of the way, and nothing can come between that soul and glory. Observe, It is spoken of as a thing done, *he glorified*, because of the certainty of it; he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.

In the eternal glorification of *all* the elect, God's design of love has its full accomplishment. This was it he aimed at all along, to bring them to heaven. Nothing less than that glory would make up the fulness of his covenant-relation to them as God; and therefore in all he doth for them, and in them, he has this in his eye. Are they chosen? It is to salvation. Called? It is to his kingdom and glory. Begotten again? It is to an inheritance incorruptible. Afflicted? It is to work for them this exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Observe, The author of all these is the same: It is God himself that predestinated, calleth, justifieth, glorifieth; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. Created wills are so very fickle, and created powers so very feeble, that if any of these did depend upon the creature, the whole would shake: But God himself hath undertaken the doing of it from first to last, that we might abide in a constant dependence upon him, and subjection to him, and ascribe all the praise to him; that every crown may be cast before the throne. This is a mighty encouragement to our faith and hope; for, as for God, his way, his work is perfect; he that hath laid the foundation, will build upon it; and the top stone will at length be brought forth with shoutings, and it will be our eternal work to cry, grace, grace to it.

31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth: 34. Who is he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36. (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter) 37. Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. 38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The apostle closes his excellent discourse upon the privileges of believers, with a holy triumph, in the name of all the saints.

Having largely set forth the mystery of God's love to us in Christ, and the exceeding great and precious privileges we enjoy by him, he concludes like an orator, *What shall we then say to these things?* What use shall we make of all that has been said? He speaks as one amazed and swallowed up with the contemplation and admiration of it, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things, the less we wonder at them; but the further we are led into an acquaintance with gospel mysteries, the more we are affected with the admiration of them. If Paul were at a loss what to say to these things, no marvel if we be.

And what doth he say? Why, if ever Paul rode in a triumphant chariot, on this side heaven, here it was: With such a holy height and bravery of spirit, with such a fluency and copiousness of expression, doth he here comfort himself and all the people of God, upon the consideration of these privileges.

No. cvi.

In general, he here makes a challenge; throws down the gauntlet, as it were, dares all the enemies of the saints to do their worst: *If God be for us, who can be against us?* The ground of the challenge is God's being for us; in that he sums up all our privileges. That includes all, that *God is for us*; not only reconciled to us, and so not against us; but in covenant with us, and so engaged for us: All his attributes for us, his promises for us, all that he is, and hath, and doth, is for his people. He performeth all things for them. He is for them, even when he seems to act against them.

And if so, *who can be against us?* i. e. so as to prevail against us, so as to hinder our happiness. Be they ever so great and strong, ever so many, ever so mighty, ever so malicious, what can they do? While God is for us, and we keep in his love, we may with a holy boldness defy all the powers of darkness. Let Satan do his worst, he is chained; let the world do its worst, it is conquered: Principalities and powers are spoiled and disarmed, and triumphed over in the cross of Christ. Who then dares fight against us while God himself is fighting for us? And this we say to these things, this is the inference we draw from these premises. More particularly,

First, We have supplies ready in all our wants, *ver.* 32. *He that spared, &c.* Who can be against us to strip us, to deprive us of our comforts? Who can cut off our streams, while we have a fountain to go to?

(1.) Observe what God has done for us, on which the hopes are built: *He spared not his own Son.* When he was to undertake our salvation, the Father was willing to part with him, did not think him too precious a gift to bestow for the salvation of poor souls; now we may know that he loves us, in that he hath not withheld his Son, *his own Son*, his only Son, from us, as he said of Abraham, *Gen.* xxii. 12. If nothing less will save man, rather than man shall perish, let him go, though it were out of his bosom. Thus did he *deliver him up for us all*, i. e. for all the elect, for us all; not only for our good, but in our stead, as a sacrifice of atonement to be a propitiation for sin. When he had undertaken it, he did not *spare* him. Though he were his own Son, yet being made sin for us, it pleased the Lord to bruise him. *Οὐκ ἐφείσατο*, he did not bate him a farthing of that debt, but charged it home. *Awake, O sword.* He did not *spare his own Son that served him*, that he might spare us, though we have done him so much disservice.

(2.) What we may therefore expect he will do. He will *with him freely give us all things.* (1.) It is implied, that he will give us Christ, for other things are bestowed *with him*; not only *with him* given for us, but *with him* given to us. He that put himself to so much charge to make the purchase for us, surely will not stick at making the application to us. (2.) He will *with him freely give us all things*, i. e. all things that he sees to be needful and necessary for us; all good things, and more we would not desire, *Psal.* xxxiv. 10. And infinite wisdom shall be the judge, whether it be good for us, and needful for us, or no. *Freely give*; freely without reluctance; he is ready to give, meets us with his favours: and freely without recompence, without money, and without price.

How shall he not? Can it be imagined, that he should do the greater, and not do the lesser? That he should give so great a gift for us when we were enemies, and should deny us any good thing, now through him we are friends and children? Thus may we by faith argue against our fears of want. He that hath prepared a crown and kingdom for us, will be sure to give us enough to bear our charges in the way to it. He that hath designed us for the inheritance of sons when we come to age, will not let us want necessities in the mean time.

Secondly, We have an answer ready to all accusations, and a security against all condemnations. *Ver.* 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing?* Doth the law accuse them? Their own consciences accuse them? Is the devil the accuser of the brethren, accusing them before our God day and night? This is enough to answer all those accusations, *it is God that justifieth.* Men may justify themselves, as the Pharisees did, and yet the accusations may be in full force against them; but if God justifies, that answers all. He is the judge, the king, the party offended, and his judgment is according to truth, and sooner or later all the world will be brought to be of his mind: So that we may challenge all our accusers to come and put in their charge. This overthrows them all; it is God, the righteous, faithful God, that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? Though they cannot make good the charge, yet they will be ready to condemn; but we have a plea ready, to move in arrest of judgment, a plea which cannot be over-ruled.

It is Christ that died, &c. It is by virtue of our interest in Christ, our relation to him, and our union with him, that we are thus secured.

(1.) His death; it is *Christ that died.* By the merit of his death he paid our debt; and the surety's payment is a good plea to an action of debt. It is Christ, an able, all-sufficient Saviour.

(2.) His resurrection; *yea, rather that is risen again.* This is a much greater encouragement, for it is a convincing evidence that divine justice was satisfied by the merit of his death. His resur-

rection

rection was his acquittance, it was a legal discharge. Therefore the apostle mentions it with a *yea, rather*. If he had died, and not risen again, we had been where we were.

(3.) His sitting at the right hand of God. He is *even at the right hand of God*. A further evidence, that he had done his work, and a mighty encouragement to us in reference to all accusations, that we have a friend, such a friend in court. At the *right hand of God*; which notes, that he is ready there, always at hand, and that he is ruling there; all power is given to him. Our friend is himself the judge.

(4.) The intercession which he makes there. He is there, not unconcerned about us, not forgetful of us, but *making intercession*. He is agent for us there; an advocate for us, to answer all accusations, to put in our plea, and to prosecute it with effect, to appear for us, and to present our petitions.

And is not this abundant matter for comfort? What shall we say to these things? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? What room is left for doubting and disquietment? Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

Some understand the accusation and condemnation here spoken of, of that which the suffering saints met with from men. The primitive Christians had many black crimes laid to their charge; heresy, sedition, rebellion, and what not? For these the ruling powers condemned them; but no matter for that, (saith the apostle) while we stand right at God's bar, it is of no great moment how we stand at mens. To all the hard censures, the malicious calumnies, and the unjust and unrighteous sentences of men, we may with comfort oppose our justification before God through Christ Jesus, as that which doth abundantly countervail, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

3. We have good assurance of our preservation and continuance in this blessed state, *ver. 35, ad fin.* The fears of the saints lest they should lose their hold of Christ, are oftentimes very discouraging and disquieting, and create them a great deal of disturbance: but here is that which may silence their fears, and still such storms, that nothing can separate them.

We have here from the apostle,

First, A daring challenge to all the enemies of the saints, to separate them, if they could, from the love of Christ. *Who shall?* None shall, *ver. 35, 36, 37.* God having manifested his love in giving his own Son for us, and not sticking at that, can we imagine that any thing else should divert or dissolve that love? Observe here,

(1.) The present calamities of Christ's beloved ones supposed; that they meet with *tribulation* on all hands, are in *distress*, that they know not which way to look for any succour and relief in this world; are followed with *persecution* from an angry malicious world, that always hated those whom Christ loved; pinched with *famine*, and starved with *nakedness*, when stripped of all *creature comforts*; exposed to the greatest *perils*; the *sword* of the magistrate drawn against them, ready to be sheathed in their bowels, bathed in their blood. Can a case be supposed more black and dismal? It is illustrated, *ver. 36.* by a passage quoted from *Psal. xlv. 22.* *For thy sake we are killed all the day long*: Which intimates, that we are not to think strange, no not concerning the fiery bloody trial. We see the Old Testament saints had the same lot, so persecuted they the prophets that were before us. *Killed all the day long*, i. e. continually exposed to, and expecting of, the fatal stroke. There is still every day, and all the day long, one or other of the people of God bleeding and dying under the rage of persecuting enemies. *Accounted as sheep for the slaughter*; they make no more of killing a Christian, than of butchering a sheep. Sheep are killed, not because they are hurtful while they live, but because they are useful when they are dead: They kill the Christians to please themselves, to be food to their malice. *They eat up my people as they eat bread.* *Psal. xiv. 4.*

(2.) The inability of all these things to separate us from the love of Christ. Shall they, can they, do it? No, by no means. All this will not cut the bond of love and friendship that is betwixt Christ and true believers.

1. Christ doth not, will not, love us the less for all this. All these troubles are very consistent with the strong and constant love of the Lord Jesus. They are neither a *cause*, nor an *evidence* of the abatement of his love. When Paul was whipped, and beaten, and imprisoned, and stoned, did Christ love him ever the less? Were his favours intermitted? His smiles any whit suspended? His visits more shy? By no means, but the contrary. These things separate us from the love of other friends: When Paul was brought before Nero, all men forsook him, but then the Lord stood by him, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. Whatever persecuting enemies may rob us of, they cannot rob us of the love of Christ; they cannot intercept his love-tokens, they cannot interrupt or exclude his visits; and therefore let them do their worst, they cannot make a true believer miserable.

2. We do not, will not, love him the less for this; and that for this reason, because we do not think that he loves us the less. Charity thinks no evil, entertains no misgiving thoughts, makes no hard conclusions, no unkind constructions, takes all in good part that comes from love. A true Christian loves Christ never the less, though he suffer for him; thinks never the worse of Christ, though he lose all for him.

(3.) The triumph of believers in this, *ver. 37.* *Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors.*

1. We are *conquerors*: Though killed all the day long, yet conquerors. A strange way of conquering, but it was Christ's way; thus he triumphed over principalities and powers in his cross. It is a surer and a nobler way of conquest by faith and patience, than by fire and sword. The enemies have sometimes confessed themselves baffled and overcome by the invincible courage and constancy of the martyrs, who thus overcame the most victorious princes by not loving their lives to the death, *Rev. xii. 11.*

2. We are *more than conquerors*. In our patient bearing of these trials we are not only conquerors, but *more than conquerors*, that is, triumphers. Those are more than conquerors, that conquer,

(1.) With little loss. Many conquests are dear bought; but what do the suffering saints lose? Why, they lose that which the gold loses in the furnace, nothing but the dross. It is no great loss to lose things which are not; a body that is of the earth, earthy.

(2.) With great gain. The spoils are exceeding rich; glory, honour, and peace, a crown of righteousness that fades not away. In this the suffering saints have triumphed; not only have not been separated from the love of Christ, but have been taken into the most sensible endearments and embraces of it. *As afflictions abound, consolations much more abound*, 2 Cor. xv. There is one more than a conqueror, when pressed above measure. He that embraced the stake, and said, welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life: He that dated his letter from the delectable orchard of the leonine prison: He that said, in these flames I feel no more pain than if I were upon a bed of down: She that, a little before her martyrdom, being asked how she did, said, well and merry, and going to heaven: Those that have gone smiling to the stake, and stood singing in the flames; these were more than conquerors.

3. It is only *through Christ that loved us*: The merit of his death taking the sting out of all these troubles; the Spirit of his grace strengthening us, and enabling us to bear them with holy courage and constancy, and coming in with special comforts and supports. Thus we are conquerors, not in our own strength, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We are conquerors by virtue of our interest in Christ's victory. He hath overcome the world for us, *John xvi. ult.* both the good things and the evil things of it; so that we have nothing else to do but to pursue the victory, and to divide the spoil, and so are more than conquerors.

Secondly, A direct and positive conclusion of the whole matter. *For I am persuaded*, *ver. 38, 39.* It notes a full, and strong, and affectionate persuasion, arising from the experience of the strength and sweetness of the divine love. And here he enumerates all those things which might be supposed likely to separate between Christ and believers, and concludes that it could not be done.

1. *Neither death nor life*; neither the terrors of death on the one hand, nor the comforts and pleasures of life on the other; neither the fear of death, nor the hope of life. Or, we shall not be separated from that love neither in death nor life.

2. *Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers*. Both the good, angels and the bad, are called *principalities and powers*: The good, *Eph. i. 21. Col. i. 19.* The bad, *Eph. vi. 12. Col. ii. 15.* And neither shall do it. The good angels will not, the bad shall not; and neither can. The good angels are engaged friends, the bad are restrained enemies.

3. *Nor things present, nor things to come*: Neither the sense of troubles present, nor the fear of troubles to come. Time shall not separate us, eternity shall not. Things present separate us from things to come, and things to come separate and cut us off from things present; but neither from the love of Christ, whose favour is twisted in with both present things, and things to come.

4. *Nor height, nor depth*: Neither the height of prosperity and preferment, nor the dept of adversity and disgrace. Nothing from heaven above, no storms, no tempests; nothing on earth below, no rocks, no seas, no dungeons.

5. *Nor any other creature*: Any thing that can be named or thought of, it will not, it cannot, separate us from the *love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. It cannot cut off, or impair our love to God, or God's to us; nothing doth it, can do it, but sin. Observe, The love that is between God and true believers, is through Christ: He is the Mediator of our love; it is in and through him that God can love us, and that we dare love God. That is the ground of the steadfastness of the love; therefore God rests in his love, *Zeph. iii. 17.* because Jesus Christ, in whom he loves us, is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

Mr. Hugh Kennedy, an eminent Christian of Ayr in Scotland, when he was dying, called for a Bible; but finding his sight gone, he said, turn me to the eighth of the Romans, and set my finger at those words, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life, &c.* Now, said he, is my finger upon them? And when they told him it was, without speaking any more, he said, Now God be with you, my children; I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night; and so departed.

C H A P. IX.

The apostle having plainly asserted, and largely proved, that justification and salvation is to be had by faith only, and not by the works of the law; by Christ, and not by Moses; comes, in this and the following chapters, to anticipate an objection, which might be made against this. If this be so, then what comes of the Jews, of them all as a complex body; especially those of them that do not embrace Christ, nor believe the gospel? By this rule they must needs come short of happiness; and then, what becomes of the promise made to the fathers, which entailed salvation upon the Jews? Is not that promise nullified, and made of none effect? Which is not a thing to be imagined concerning any word of God: That doctrine therefore, might they say, is not to be embraced, from which flows such a consequence as this. That the consequence of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews follows from Paul's doctrine, he grants; but endeavours to soften and mollify, ver. 1—5. But that from thence it follows, that the word of God takes no effect, he denies, ver. 6. and proves the denial in the rest of the chapter. Which serveth likewise to illustrate the great doctrine of predestination which he had spoken of, chap. viii. 28. as the first wheel, that in the business of salvation sets all the other wheels a-going.

1. I Say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the holy Ghost, 2. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3. For I could wish that my self were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4. Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5. Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

We have here the apostle's solemn profession of a great concern for the nation and people of the Jews: That he was heartily troubled, that so many of them were enemies to the gospel, and out of the way of salvation: For this he had great heaviness, and continual sorrow. Such a profession as this was requisite to take off the odium, which otherwise he might have contracted by asserting and proving their rejection. It is wisdom as much as may be to mollify those truths, which sound harsh, and seem unpleasant: dip the nail in oil, it will drive the better. The Jews had a particular pique at Paul, above any of the apostles, as appears by the story of the Acts; and therefore were the more apt to take things amiss at him: To prevent which, he introduceth his discourse with this tender and affectionate profession; that they might not think he triumphed or insulted over the rejected Jews, or was pleased with the calamities that were coming upon them. Thus Jeremiah appeals to God concerning the Jews of his day, whose ruin was hastening on, Jer. xvii. 16. Neither have I desired the woful day, thou knowest. Nay, Paul was so far from desiring it, that he doth most pathetically deprecate it. And lest this should be thought only a copy of his countenance, to flatter and please them,

1. He asserts it with a solemn protestation, ver. 1. I say the truth in Christ, i. e. I speak it as a Christian, one of God's people, children that will not lye; as one that knows not how to give flattering titles. Or, I appeal to Christ, who searcheth the heart, concerning it. He appeals likewise to his own conscience, which was instead of a thousand witnesses. That which he was going to assert, was not only a great and weighty thing; such solemn protestations are not to be thrown away upon trifles; but it was likewise a secret; it was concerning a sorrow in his heart, to which none was a capable, competent witness, but God and his own conscience. That I have great heaviness, ver. 2. He doth not say for what; the very mention of it was unpleasant and invidious; but it is plain, he means for the rejection of the Jews.

2. He backs it with a very serious imprecation, which he was ready to make out of love to the Jews. I could wish, he doth not say, I do wish, for it was no proper means appointed for such an end; but if it were, I could wish, that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren. A very high pang of zeal and affection for his countrymen. He would be willing to undergo the greatest misery to do them good. Love uses to be thus bold and venturous, and self-denying. Because the glory of God's grace in the salvation of many, is to be preferred before the welfare and happiness of a single person; Paul, if they were put in competi-

tion, would be content to forego all his own happiness to purchase theirs.

(1.) He would be content to be cut off from the land of the living, in the most shameful and ignominious manner, as an anathema, or a devoted person. They thirsted for his blood, persecuted him as the most obnoxious person in the world, the curse and plague of his generation, 1 Cor. iv. 13. Acts xxii. 22. Now, saith Paul, I am willing to bear all this, and a great deal more, for your good: Abuse me as much as you will, count and call me at your pleasure; your unbelief and rejection creates in my heart a heaviness so much greater than all these troubles can, that I could look upon them not only as tolerable, but as desirable, rather than this rejection.

(2.) He would be content to be excommunicated from the society of the faithful, to be separated from the church, and from the communion of saints, as a heathen man and a publican, if that would do them any good. He could wish himself no more remembered among the saints, his name blotted out of the church-records; though he had been so great a planter of churches, and the spiritual father of so many thousands; yet he would be content to be disowned by the church, cut off from all communion with it, and his name buried in oblivion or reproach, for the good of the Jews. It may be some of the Jews had a prejudice against Christianity, for Paul's sake; such a spleen they had at him, that they hated the religion that he was of: If that stumble you, saith Paul, I could wish I might be cast out, not embraced as a Christian, so you might but be taken in. Thus Moses, Exod. xxxii. 32. in a like holy passion of concern, Blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.

(3.) Nay, some think the expression goes further, and that he could be content to be cut off from all his share of happiness in Christ, if that might be a means of their salvation. It is a common charity that begins at home; this is something higher, and more noble and generous.

3. He gives us the reason of this affection and concern.

(1.) Because of their relation to him: My brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. Though they were very bitter against him upon all occasions, and gave him the most unnatural and barbarous usage; yet thus respectfully doth he speak of them. It shews him to be a man of a forgiving spirit: Not that I had ought to accuse my nation of, Acts xxviii. 19. My kinsmen: Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. We ought to be in a special manner concerned for the spiritual good of our relations, our brethren and kinsmen. To them we lie under special engagements; and we have more opportunity of doing good to them; and concerning them, and our usefulness to them, we must in a special manner give account.

(2.) Especially because of their relation to God, ver. 4, 5. Who are Israelites, the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen; taken into the covenant of peculiarity, dignified and distinguished by visible church-privileges; many of which are here mentioned: The adoption; not that which is saving, and which entitleth to eternal happiness; but that which was external and typical, and entitled them to the land of Canaan. Israel is my son, Exod. iv. 22.

And the glory; the ark and the mercy-seat, over which God dwelt between the cherubims; that was the glory of Israel, 1 Sam. iv. 21. The many symbols and tokens of the divine presence and conduct, the cloud, the Shechinah, the distinguishing favours conferred upon them, these were the glory.

And the covenants; the covenant made with Abraham, and often renewed with his seed, upon divers occasions. There was a covenant at Sinai, Exod. xxiv. in the plains of Moab, Deut. xxix. at Shechem, Josh. xxiv. and often afterwards; and still these pertained to Israel. Or, the covenant of peculiarity, and in that, as in the type, the covenant of grace.

And the giving of the law. It was to them that the ceremonial and judicial law were given, and the moral law in writing pertained to them. It is a great privilege to have the law of God among us, and it is to be accounted so, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. This was the grandeur of Israel, Deut. iv. 7, 8.

And the service of God. They had the ordinances of God's worship among them; the temple, the altars, the priests, the sacrifices, the feasts, and the institutions relating to them: They were in this respect greatly honoured, that while other nations were worshipping and serving stocks and stones, and devils, and they knew not what other idols of their own invention; the Israelites were serving the true God in the way of his own appointment.

And the promises. Particular promises added to the general covenant; promises relating to the Messiah, and the gospel-state. Observe, the promises accompany the giving of the law, and the service of God; for the comfort of the promises is to be had in obedience to that law, and attendance upon that service.

Ver. 5. Whose are the fathers; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those men of renown, that stood so high in the favour of God. The Jews stand in relation to them, are their children, and proud enough they were of it; we have Abraham to our father. It was for the father's sake, that they were taken into covenant, Rom. xi. 28. But the greatest honour of all was, that of them as concerning

cerning the flesh, i. e. as to his human nature, *Christ came*; for he took on him the seed of Abraham, *Heb. ii. 16*. As to his divine nature, he is the Lord from heaven; but as to his human nature, he is of the seed of Abraham. This was the great privilege of the Jews, that Christ was of kin to them.

Mentioning Christ, he interposeth a very great word concerning him, that he is *over all, God blessed for ever*. Lest the Jews should think meanly of him, because he was of their alliance; he here speaks thus honourably concerning him: and it is a very full proof of the Godhead of Christ; he is not only *over all*, as mediator; but he is *God blessed for ever*. Therefore, how much forer punishment were they worthy of, that rejected him? It was likewise the honour of the Jews, and one reason why Paul had a kindness for them, that seeing God blessed for ever would be a man, he would be a Jew; and, considering the posture and character of that people, at that time, may well be looked upon as a part of his humiliation.

6. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. 10. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, 11. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth) 12. It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The apostle having made his way to that which he had to say, concerning the rejection of the body of his countrymen, with a protestation of his own affection for them, and a concession of their undoubted privileges; comes in these verses, and the following part of the chapter, to prove, that the rejection of the Jews, by the establishment of the gospel-dispensation, did not at all invalidate the word of God's promise to the patriarchs: *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect*, ver. 6. Which, considering that present state of the Jews, which created to Paul so much *heaviness and continual sorrow*, ver. 2. might be suspected. We are not to think of the inefficacy of any word of God: Nothing that he hath spoken, doth or can fall to the ground; see *Isa. lv. 10, 11*. The promises and threatnings shall have their accomplishment; and one way or other he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. This is to be understood, especially of the promise of God, which by subsequent providences may be to a wavering faith very doubtful; but it is not, it cannot be made of no effect; at the end it will speak, and not lye.

Now the difficulty is to reconcile the rejection of the unbelieving Jews with the word of God's promise, and the external tokens of the divine favour, which had been conferred upon them.

This he doth four ways.

1. By explaining the true meaning and intention of the promise, ver. 6—13.

2. By asserting and proving the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men, ver. 14—24.

3. By shewing how this rejection of the Jews, and the taking in of the Gentiles, was foretold in the Old Testament, ver. 25—29.

4. By fixing the true reason of the Jews rejection, ver. 29, *ad fin.*

In this paragraph the apostle explains the true meaning and intention of the promise. When we mistake the word, and misunderstand the promise; no marvel, if we are ready to quarrel with God about the accomplishment; and therefore, the sense of that must first be duly stated. Now, he here makes it out, that when God said, he would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed, which was the famous promise made unto the fathers; he did not mean it of all his seed according to the flesh, as if it were a necessary concomitant of the blood of Abraham; but that he intended it with a limitation only to such and such: And as from the beginning it was appropriated to Isaac, and not to Ishmael; to Jacob, and not to Esau; and yet for all that, the word of God was not made of no effect; so now the same promise is appropriated to believing Jews that embrace Christ and Christianity, which though it throw off multitudes that refuse Christ, yet the promise is not therefore defeated and invalidated, no more than it was by the typical rejection of Ishmael and Esau.

1. He lays down his proposition, that *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*, ver. 6. *neither because they are, &c.* ver. 7. Many that descended from the loins of Abraham and Jacob, and were of that people which were surnamed by the name of Israel,

yet were very far from being Israelites indeed, interested in the saving benefits of the new covenant. They are not all really Israel, that are so in name and profession. It doth not follow, that because they are the seed of Abraham, therefore they must needs be the children of God; though they themselves fancied so, boasted much of, and built much upon their relation to Abraham, *Mat. iii. 9. John viii. 33, 39*. But it doth not follow. Grace doth not run in a blood; nor are saving benefits inseparably annexed to external church-privileges: Though it is common for people thus to stretch the meaning of God's promise, to bolster themselves up in a vain hope.

2. He proves this by instances; and therein shews, not only that some of Abraham's seed were chosen, and others not, but that God therein wrought according to the counsel of his own will; and not with regard to that law of commandments, which the present unbelieving Jews were so strangely wedded to.

(1.) He instanceth in the case of Isaac and Ishmael, both of them the seed of Abraham; and yet Isaac only taken into covenant with God, and Ishmael rejected and cast out. For this he quotes *Gen. xxi. 12. In Isaac shall thy seed be called*: Which comes in there as a reason, why Abraham must be willing to cast out the bond-woman and her son, because the covenant was to be established with Isaac, *chap. xvii. 19*. And yet the word which God had spoken, that he would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, did not therefore fall to the ground; for the blessings wrap up in that great word, being communicated by God as a benefactor, he was free to determine on what head they should rest, and accordingly entailed them upon Isaac, and rejected Ishmael.

This he explains further, ver. 8, 9. and shews what God intended to teach us by this dispensation.

1. That the children of the flesh, as such, by virtue of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, are not therefore the children of God, for then Ishmael had put in a good claim. This remark comes home to the unbelieving Jews, who boasted of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, and looked for justification in a fleshly way, by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. They had confidence in the flesh, *Phil. iii. 3*.

Ishmael was a *child of the flesh*, conceived by Hagar, that was young, and fresh, and likely enough to have children; there was nothing extraordinary or supernatural in his conception, as there was in Isaac's; he was *born after the flesh*, *Gal. iv. 29*. representing those that expect justification and salvation by their own strength and righteousness.

2. That the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Those that have the honour and happiness of being counted for the seed, have it not for the sake of any merit or desert of their own, but purely by virtue of the promise, in which God hath obliged himself of his own good pleasure to grant the promised favour. Isaac was a child of promise; that he proves, ver. 9. quoted from *Gen. xviii. 10*. He was a child promised; so were many others; but he was conceived and born by force; and virtue of the promise, and so a proper type and figure of those who are now counted for the seed, even true believers who are born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; of the incorruptible seed, even the word of promise; by virtue of the special promise of a new heart; see *Gal. iv. 26*. It was through faith that Isaac was conceived, *Heb. xi. 11*. Thus were the great mysteries of salvation taught under the Old Testament, not in express words, but by significant types and dispensations of providence; which to them then were not so clear, as they are to us now, when the veil is taken away, and the types expounded by the antitypes.

(2.) In the case of Jacob and Esau, ver. 10, 11, 12, 13. which is much stronger, to shew that the carnal seed of Abraham were not as such interested in the promise, but only such of them as God in sovereignty had appointed. There was a previous difference between Ishmael and Isaac before Ishmael was cast out: Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, born long before Isaac, was of a fierce and rugged disposition, and had mocked, or persecuted Isaac; to all which it might be supposed God had regard, when he appointed Abraham to cast him out. But in the case of Jacob and Esau, it was neither so nor so, they were both the sons of Isaac by one mother: They were conceived, *ἐξ ἐνός*, by one conception; *ἐξ ἐνός κόβης*, so some copies read it. The difference was made between them by the divine counsel, before they were born, or had done any good or evil. Both lay struggling alike in their mother's womb, when it was said, *The elder shall serve the younger*; without respect to good or bad works done or foreseen. That the purpose of God according to election might stand; that this great truth may be established, that God chooseth some and refuseth others, as a free agent; by his own absolute and sovereign will, dispensing his favours, or withholding them, as he pleaseth.

This difference, that was put between Jacob and Esau, he further illustrates by a quotation from *Mal. i. 2, 3*. where it is said, not of Jacob and Esau the persons, but the Edomites and Israelites their posterity; *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*. The people of Israel were taken into the covenant of peculiarity, had the land of Canaan given them, were blessed with the more signal appearances of God for them in special protections, supplies,

and deliverances, whilst the Edomites were rejected, had no temple, altar, priests, prophets; no such particular care taken of them, or kindness shewed to them. Such a difference did God put between those two nations, that both descended from the loins of Abraham and Isaac; as at first there was a difference put between Jacob and Esau, the distinguishing heads of those two nations.

So that all this chusing and refusing was typical, and intended to shadow forth some other election and rejection.

1. Some understand it of the election and rejection of conditions or qualifications. As God chose Isaac and Jacob, and rejected Ishmael and Esau, so he might and did choose faith to be the condition of salvation and reject the works of the law: Thus Arminius understands it, *De relictis & assumptis talibus*, i. e. *certain qualitate notatis*; so John Goodwin. But this doth very much strain the scripture; for the apostle speaks all along of persons, he has mercy on whom, he doth not say on what kind of people he will have mercy. Besides that against this sense, those two objections, *ver. 14, 19*. do not at all arise; and his answer to them concerning God's absolute sovereignty over the children of men, is not at all pertinent; if no more be meant than his appointing the conditions of salvation.

2. Others understand it of the election and rejection of particular persons; some loved, and others hated from eternity. But the apostle speaks of Jacob and Esau, not in their own persons, but as ancestors; Jacob the people, and Esau the people; nor doth God damn any, or decree so to do, merely because he will do it, without any reason taken from their own deserts.

3. Others therefore understand it of the election and rejection of people considered complexly. His design is to justify God, and his mercy and truth, in calling the Gentiles, and taking them into the church, and into covenant with himself, while he suffered the obstinate part of the Jews to persist in unbelief, and so to unchurch themselves; thus hiding from their eyes the things that belonged to their peace.

The apostle's reasoning for the explication and proof of this, is, however, very applicable to, and no doubt (as is usual in scripture) was intended for the clearing of the methods of God's grace towards particular persons; for the communication of saving benefits bears some analogy to the communication of church-privileges.

The chusing of Jacob the younger, and preferring him before Esau the elder, so crossing hands, was to intimate, that the Jews, though the natural seed of Abraham, and the first-born of the church, should be laid aside; and the Gentiles, who were as the younger brother, should be taken in, in their stead, and have the birthright and blessing.

The Jews, considered as a body politick, a nation and people knit together by the bond and cement of the ceremonial law, the temple and priesthood, the center of their unity, had for many ages been the darlings and favourites of heaven, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, dignified and distinguished by God's miraculous appearances among them, and for them. Now the gospel was preached, and Christian churches planted, this national body was thereby abandoned, their church-polity dissolved, and Christian churches (and in process of times, Christian nations) embodied in like manner, become their successors in the divine favour, and those special privileges and protections which were the products of that favour. To clear up the justice of God in this great dispensation, is the scope of the apostle here.

14. What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* God forbid. 15. For he saith to Moses, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* 16. So then *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* 17. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, *Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* 18. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will, he hardeneth. 19. Thou wilt say then unto me, *Why doth he yet find fault?* For who hath resisted his will? 20. Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, *Why hast thou made me thus?* 21. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22. *What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?* 23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory? 24. Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

The apostle, having asserted the true meaning of the promise, comes here to maintain and prove the absolute sovereignty of No. cvi.

God, in disposing of the children of men, with reference to their eternal state. And herein God is to be considered, not as rector and governour, distributing rewards and punishments, according to his revealed laws and covenants, but as an owner and benefactor, giving to the children of men such grace and favour as he has determined in and by his secret and eternal will and counsel: both the favour of visible church-membership and privileges, which is given to some people, and denied to others; and the favour of effectual grace, which is given to some particular persons, and denied to others.

Now this part of his discourse is in answer to two objections.

1. It might be objected, *Is there unrighteousness with God?* If God, in dealing with the children of men, do thus, in an arbitrary manner, chuse some, and refuse others; may it not be suspected, that there is unrighteousness with him? This the apostle startles at the thought of; *God forbid!* far be it from us to think such a thing; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? *Gen. xviii. 25. Rom. iii. 5, 6.*

He denies the consequence, and proves the denial.

(1.) In respect of those to whom he shews mercy, *ver. 15, 16.* He quotes that scripture to shew God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours, *Exod. xxxiii. 19. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.* All God's reasons of mercy are taken from within himself. All the children of men being plunged alike into a state of sin and misery, equally under guilt and wrath, God, in a way of sovereignty, picks out some from this fallen apostatized race, to be vessels of grace and glory. He dispenseth his gifts to whom he will, without giving us any reason: According to his own good pleasure pitcheth upon some to be monuments of mercy and grace, preventing grace, effectual grace, while he passeth by others. The expression is very emphatical, and the repetition makes it more so; *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*: It imports a perfect absoluteness in God's will; he will do what he will, and giveth not account of any of his matters, nor is it fit he should. As these great words, *I am that I am*, *Exod. iii. 14.* do abundantly express the absolute independency of his being; so these words, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*, do as fully express the absolute prerogative and sovereignty of his will.

To vindicate the righteousness of God, in shewing mercy to whom he will, the apostle appeals to that, which God himself had spoken, wherein he claims this sovereign power and liberty. God is a competent judge, even in his own case. Whatsoever God doth, or is resolved to do, is both by the one and the other proved to be just.

Ἐλεῖσω ὃν ἄν ἐλεῶ, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. When I begin, I will make an end. Therefore God's mercy endures for ever, because the reason of it is fetched from within himself; therefore, his gifts and callings are without repentance.

From hence he infers, *ver. 16. It is not of him that willeth.* Whatever good comes from God to man, the glory of it is not to be ascribed to the most generous desire, or to the most industrious endeavour of man, but only and purely to the free grace and mercy of God. In Jacob's case, it was *not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth*; it was not the earnest will and desire of Rebecca, that Jacob might have the blessing; it was not Jacob's haste to get it, (for he was fain to run for it) that procured him the blessing, but only the mercy and grace of God. Wherein the holy happy people of God differ from other people, it is God and his grace that makes them differ.

Applying this general rule to the particular case that Paul hath before him; the reason why the unworthy, undeserving, ill-deserving Gentiles are called, and grafted into the church, while the greatest part of the Jews are left to perish in unbelief, is not because those Gentiles were better deserving, or better disposed for such a favour, but because of God's free grace that made that difference. The Gentiles did neither *will* it, nor *run* for it, for they *sat in darkness*, *Matt. iv. 6.* In darkness, therefore not willing what they knew not; sitting in darkness, a contented posture, therefore not running to meet it, but *prevented* with these invaluable blessings of goodness. Such is the method of God's grace towards all that partake of it, for he is found of them that sought him not, *Isa. lxv. 1.* in this preventing, effectual, distinguishing grace, he acts as a benefactor, whose grace is his own. Our eye therefore must not be evil, because his is good: but of all the grace that we or others have, he must have the glory: *Not unto us, Psal. cxv. 1.*

(2.) In respect of those who perish, *ver. 17.* God's sovereignty, manifested in the ruin of sinners, is here discovered in the instance of Pharaoh; it is quoted from *Exod. ix. 16.* Observe,

First, What God did with Pharaoh; he *raised him up*, brought him into the world, made him famous, gave him the kingdom, and power; set him up as a beacon upon a hill, as the *mark* of all his plagues; compare *Exod. ix. 15.* hardened his heart, as he had said he would, *Exod. iv. 21. I will harden his heart*, i. e. withdraw softning grace, leave him to himself, let Satan loose against him, and lay hardening providences before him. Or, by raising him up, may be meant the intermission of the plagues which gave Pharaoh respite, and the reprieve of Pharaoh in those plagues. In the Hebrew, *I have made thee stand*, continued thee yet in the land of the living.

Thus doth God *raise up* sinners, make them for himself, even for the day of evil, *Prov. xvi. 4.* raise them up in outward prosperity, external privileges, (*Matt. xi. 23*) sparing mercies.

Secondly, What he designed in it: *That I might shew my power in thee.* God would, by all this, serve the honour of his name, and manifest his power in baffling the pride and insolence of that great and daring tyrant, that bid defiance to heaven itself, and trampled upon all that was just and sacred. If Pharaoh had not been so high and mighty, so bold and hardy, the power of God had not been so illustrious in the ruining of him: but the taking off of the spirit of such a prince, who hectored at that rate, did indeed proclaim God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, *Exod. xv. 11.* This is Pharaoh and all his multitude.

Thirdly, His conclusion concerning both these, we have, *ver. 18.* *He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* The various dealings of God, by which he makes some to differ from others, must be resolved into his absolute sovereignty. He is debtor to no man, his grace is his own, and he may give it or with-hold it, as pleaseth him; we have none of us deserved it, nay, we have all justly forfeited it a thousand times; so that herein the work of our salvation is admirably well ordered, that those that are saved must thank God only, and those that perish must thank themselves only, *Hos. xiii. 9.*

We are bound, as God hath bound us, to do our utmost for the salvation of all we have to do with; but God is bound no further than he has been pleased to bind himself, by his own covenant and promise, which is his revealed will; and that is, that he will receive, and not cast out those that come to Christ; but the drawing of souls in order to that coming, is a preventing, distinguishing favour to whom he will. Had he mercy on the Gentiles? It was because he would have mercy on them. Were the Jews hardened? It was because it was his own pleasure to deny them softening grace, and to give them up to their chosen, affected unbelief: *Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.* That scripture doth excellently explain this, *Luke x. 21.* and doth, as this, shew the sovereign will of God, in giving or with-holding both the means of grace, and the effectual blessing upon those means.

2. It might be objected, *Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?* *ve. 19.* Had the apostle been arguing only for God's sovereignty, in appointing and ordering the terms and conditions of acceptance and salvation, there had not been the least colour for this objection; for he might well find fault, if people refuse to come up to the terms on which such a salvation is offered, the salvation being so great, the terms could not be hard. But there might be colour for the objection, against his arguing for the sovereignty of God in giving and with-holding differencing and preventing grace: And the objection is commonly and readily advanced against the doctrine of distinguishing grace. If God, while he gives effectual grace to some, denies it to others, why doth he find fault with those to whom he doth deny it? If he hath rejected the Jews, and hid from their eyes the things that belong to their peace; why doth he find fault with them for their blindness? If it be his pleasure to discard them as not a people, and not obtaining mercy, their knocking off themselves was no resistance of his will.

This objection he answers at large,

1. By reproving the objector, *ver. 20.* *Nay but, O man.* This is not an objection fit to be made by the creature against his Creator, by man against God. The truth, as it is in Jesus, is that which abaseth man as nothing, less than nothing, and advances God as sovereign Lord of all. Observe how contemptibly he speaks of man, when he comes to argue with God, his maker, *Who art thou?* thou that art so foolish, so feeble, so short-sighted, so incompetent a judge of the divine counsels; art thou able to fathom such a depth, dispute such a case, to trace that way of God which is in the sea, his path in the great waters?

Repliest against God? It becomes us to submit to him, not to reply against him; to lie down under his hand, not to fly in his face, or to charge him with folly.

ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος, That answerest again. God is our master, and we his servants; and it doth not become servants to answer again, *Tit. ii. 9.*

2. By resolving all into the divine sovereignty. We are the thing formed, and he is the former; and it doth not become us to challenge or arraign his wisdom in ordering and disposing of us into this or that shape or figure. The rude and unformed mass of matter hath no right to this or that form, but is shaped at the pleasure of him that formeth it.

God's sovereignty over us is fitly illustrated by this power that the potter hath over the clay, compare *Jer. xviii. 6.* where, by a like comparison, God asserts his dominion over the nation of the Jews, when he was about to magnify his justice in their destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

(1.) He gives us the comparison, *ver. 21.* The potter, out of the same lump, may make either a fashionable vessel, and a vessel fit for creditable and honourable uses, or a contemptible vessel, and a vessel in which is no pleasure; and herein he acts arbitrarily, as he might have chosen whether he would have made any

vessel of it at all, but have left it in the hole of the pit, out of which it was digged.

(2.) The reddition of the comparison, *ver. 22—24.*

Two sorts of vessels God forms out of the great lump of fallen mankind.

1. *Vessels of wrath*; vessels filled with wrath, as a vessel of wine is a vessel filled with wine, *full of the fury of the Lord,* *Isa. li. 20.* In these God is willing to shew his wrath, *i. e.* his punishing justice and his enmity to sin. This must be shewed to all the world; God will make it appear that he hates sin. He will likewise make his power known, *τὸ δυνάσασθαι αὐτοῦ.* It is a power of strength and energy, an inflicting power, which works and effects the destruction of those that perish; it is a destruction that proceeds from the *glory of his power,* *2 Thess. i. 9.* The eternal damnation of sinners will be an abundant demonstration of the power of God; for he will act in it himself immediately, his wrath preying as it were upon guilty consciences, and his arm stretched out totally to destroy their well-being; and yet at the same instant wonderfully to preserve the being of the creature.

In order to this, God *endured them with much long suffering*; exercised a great deal of patience towards them, let them alone to fill up the measure of sin, to grow till they were ripe for ruin, and so they became *fitted for destruction*, fitted by their own sin, and self-hardening. The reigning corruptions and wickedness of the soul is its preparedness and disposedness for hell: a soul is hereby made combustible matter, fit for the flames of hell.

When Christ said to the Jews, *Matt. xxiii. 32.* *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers,* that upon you may come all the righteous blood, *ver. 35.* he did, as it were, endure them with much long-suffering, that he might, by their own obstinacy and wilfulness in sin, fit themselves for destruction.

2. *Vessels of mercy*; filled with mercy. The happiness bestowed upon the saved remnant, is the fruit, not of their merit, but of God's mercy. The spring of all their joy and glory of heaven, is that mercy of God which endures for ever. *Vessels of honour* must to eternity own themselves *vessels of mercy.* Observe,

(1.) What he designs in them; *to make known the riches of his glory,* *i. e.* of his goodness; for God's goodness is his greatest glory, especially when it is communicated with the greatest sovereignty. *I beseech thee shew me thy glory,* saith Moses, *Exod. xxxiii. 18.* I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, saith God, *ver. 19.* and that given out freely, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.*

God makes known his glory, this goodness of his, in the preservation and supply of all the creatures; the earth is full of his goodness, and the year crowned with it; but when he would demonstrate the *riches* of his goodness, unfathomable riches, he doth it in the salvation of the saints, that will be to eternity glorious monuments of divine grace.

(2.) What he doth for them; he doth before *prepare them to glory.* Sanctification is the preparation of the soul for glory, making it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is God's work; we can destroy ourselves fast enough, but we cannot save ourselves; sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God that prepares saints for heaven: And all those that God designs for heaven hereafter, he prepares and fits for heaven now: He works them to the self same thing, *2 Cor. v. 5.*

And would you know who these *vessels of mercy* are? Those whom he hath called, *ver. 24.* for whom he did predestinate, them he also called with an effectual call. And these not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles; for the partition-wall being taken down, the world was laid in common; and not as it had been, God's favour appropriated to the Jews, and they put a degree nearer his acceptance than the rest of the world; they now stood upon the same level with the Gentiles; and the question is not now, whether of the seed of Abraham or no, that is neither here nor there, but whether or no called according to his purpose.

25. As he saith also in *Osee*, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her, beloved, which was not beloved. 26. And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people*; there shall they be called the children of the living God. 27. *Esaïas* also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. 28. For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29. And as *Esaïas* said before, Except the Lord of sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

Having explained the promise, and proved the divine sovereignty, the apostle here shews how the rejection of the Jews, and the taking in of the Gentiles, was foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore must needs be very well consistent with the promise made to the fathers under the Old Testament. It tends very much to the clearing of a truth, to observe how the scripture is fulfilled

fulfilled in it. The Jews would, no doubt, willingly refer it to the Old Testament, the scriptures of which were committed to them : Now he shews how this, which was so uneasy to them, was there spoken of.

1. By the prophet Hosea, who speaks of the taking in of a great many of the Gentiles, *Hof. ii. 23.* and *Hof. i. 10.* The Gentiles had not been the people of God ; not owning him, or owned by him in that relation : but, saith he, *I will call them my people, make them such, and own them as such, notwithstanding all their unworthiness.* A blessed change ! Former badness is no bar to God's present grace and mercy. *And her beloved which was not beloved.* Those that God calls *his people*, he calls *beloved* : he loves those that are his own.

And lest it might be supposed that they should become God's people only by being proselyted to their Jewish religion, and made members of that nation, he adds from *Hof. i. 10.* *In the place where it was said, &c. there shall they be called.* They need not be embodied with the Jews, nor go up to Jerusalem to worship ; but wherever they are scattered over the face of the earth, there will God own them.

Observe the great dignity and honour of the saints, that they are called *the children of the living God* ; and his calling them so makes them so. Behold what manner of love ! This honour have all his saints.

2. By the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of the casting off of many of the Jews, in two places.

(1.) One is *Isa. x. 22, 23.* which speaks of the saving of a remnant, *i. e.* but a remnant ; which though in the prophecy it seems to refer to the preservation of a remnant from the destruction and desolation that was coming upon them by Sennacherib and his army, yet is to be understood as looking further ; and sufficiently proves, that it is no strange thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham, and yet maintain his word of promise to Abraham in full force and virtue. Which is intimated in the supposition, that the number of the *children of Israel was as the sand of the sea*, which was part of the promise made to Abraham, *Gen. xxii. 17.* And yet only a remnant shall be saved ; for many are called, but few are chosen.

In this salvation of the remnant we are told, *ver. 28.* from the prophet, (1.) That he will complete the work. *He will finish the work.* When God begins, he will make an end, whether in ways of judgment or of mercy. The rejection of the unbelieving Jews, God would finish in their utter ruin by the Romans, who soon after this quite took away their place and nation. The assuming of Christian churches into the divine favour, and the spreading of the gospel in other nations, was a work which God would likewise finish, and be known by his name *J E H O V A H.* As for God, his work is perfect. Margin, *He will finish the account.* God, in his eternal counsels, has taken an account of the children of men, allotted them to such or such a condition, to such a share of privileges ; and as they come into being, his dealings with them are pursuant to these counsels : and he will finish the account, complete the mystical body, call in as many as belong to the election of grace ; and then the account will be finished. (2.) That he will *contract* it ; not only finish it, but finish it quickly. Under the Old Testament he seemed to tarry, and to make a longer and more tedious work of it ; the wheels arrived but slowly towards the extent of the church ; but now he will *cut it short*, and make a *short work upon the earth.* Gentile converts were now flying as a cloud. But he will cut it short *in righteousness*, both in wisdom and in justice. Men, when they cut short, do amiss ; they do indeed *dispatch* causes : but when God cuts short, it is always in righteousness. So the fathers generally apply it. Some understand it of the evangelical law and covenant, which Christ has introduced and established in the world : he has in that *finished* the work, put an end to the types and ceremonies of the Old Testament. Christ said, *It is finished*, and then the veil was rent, echoing as it were to the word that Christ said upon the cross. And he will *cut it short.* The work (it is *λόγος*, the word, the law) was under the Old Testament very long ; a long train of institutions, ceremonies, conditions : but now it is cut short ; our duty is now, under the gospel, summed up in a much less room than it was under the law ; the covenant was abridged and contracted ; religion is brought into a less compass. And it is *in righteousness*, in favour to us, in justice to his own design and counsel. With us contractions used to darken things ; *Brevi esse laboro, obscurus fio* ; but it is not so in this case : Though it be cut short, it is clear and plain ; and because short, the more easy.

(2.) Another is quoted from *Isa. i. 9.* where the prophet is shewing how in a time of general calamity and destruction God would preserve a seed. This is to the same purpose with the former ; and the scope of it is to shew that it was no strange thing for God to leave the greatest part of the people of the Jews to ruin, and to reserve to himself only a small remnant : So he had done formerly, as appears by their own prophets ; and they must not wonder if he did so now.

Observe, 1. What God is : He is *the Lord of sabaoth*, *i. e.* the Lord of hosts ; a Hebrew word retained in the Greek, as *1. Cor. v. 4.* All the host of heaven and earth are at his beck and dispose. When God secures a seed to himself out of a degenerate, apostate

world, he acts as Lord of sabaoth. It is an act of almighty power, and infinite sovereignty.

2. What his people are ; they are a *seed*, a small number : The corn reserved for next year's seedings, is but little, compared with that which is spent and eaten : But an useful number ; the seed, the substance of the next generation, *Isa. vi. ult.*

It is so far from being an impeachment of the justice and righteousness of God, that so many perish and are destroyed, that it is a wonder of divine power and mercy that all are not destroyed, that there are any saved : for even those that are left to be a seed, if God had dealt with them according to their sins, had perished with the rest. This is the great truth which this scripture teacheth us.

30. What shall we say then ? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith : 31. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32. Wherefore ? Because *they sought it*, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law : for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone ; 33. As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence : and whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed.

The apostle comes here at last to fix the true reason of the rejection of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews. There was a difference in the way of their seeking, and therefore there was that different success ; though still it was the free grace of God that made them differ. He concludes like an orator, *What shall we say then ?* What is the conclusion of the whole dispute ?

1. Concerning the Gentiles, observe,

(1.) How they had been alienated *from righteousness* ; they followed not after it ; they knew not their guilt and misery, and therefore were not at all solicitous to procure a remedy. In their conversion, preventing grace was greatly magnified ; God was *found of them that sought him not*, *Isa. lxxv. 1.* There was nothing in them to dispose them for such a favour, more than what free grace wrought in them. Thus doth God delight to dispense grace in a way of sovereignty and absolute dominion.

(2.) How they *attained* to righteousness notwithstanding ; *by faith* : not by being proselyted to the Jewish religion, and submitting to the ceremonial law ; but by embracing Christ, and believing in Christ, and submitting to the gospel. They attained to that by the short cut of believing sincerely in Christ, which the Jews had been long in vain beating about the bush for.

2. Concerning the Jews, observe,

(1.) How they missed their end. They *followed after the law of righteousness*, *ver. 31. i. e.* they talked hard of justification and holiness, seemed very ambitious of being the people of God, and the favourites of heaven ; but they did not *attain* to it, *i. e.* the greatest part of them did not ; as many as stuck to their old Jewish principles and ceremonies, and pursued a happiness in those observances, embracing the shadows now the substance was come ; these fell short of acceptance with God, were not owned as his people, nor went to their house justified.

(2.) How they mistook their way, which was the cause of their missing the end, *ver. 32, 33.* They sought, but not in the right way, not in the humbling way, not in the instituted appointed way.

Not by faith, not by embracing the Christian religion, and depending upon the merit of Christ, and submitting to the terms of the gospel, which were the very life and end of the law.

But they sought by the *works of the law* ; as if they were to expect justification by their observance of the precepts and ceremonies of the law of Moses.

This was the *stumbling-stone*, at which they stumbled : They could not get over this corrupt principle they had espoused, That the law was given them for no other end, but that merely by their observance of it, and obedience to it, they might be justified before God ; and so they could by no means be reconciled to the doctrine of Christ, which brought them off from that to expect justification through merit and satisfaction of another. Christ himself is to some a stone of stumbling, for which he quotes *Isa. viii. 14.* — *xxviii. 16.* It is sad, that Christ should be *set* for the fall of any, [and yet it is so, *Luke ii. 34.* that ever poison should be sucked out of the balm of Gilead, that the foundation-stone should be to any a stone of stumbling, and the rock of salvation a rock of offence : so he is to multitudes ; so he was to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected him, because he put an end to the ceremonial law. But still there is a remnant that do believe on him ; and they *shall not be ashamed*, *i. e.* their hopes and expectations of justification by him shall not be disappointed, as theirs are who expect it by the law.

So that upon the whole matter, the unbelieving Jews have no reason to quarrel with God for rejecting them ; they had a fair offer of righteousness, and life, and salvation, made them upon gospel-

gospel-terms, which they did not like, and would not come up to; and therefore if they perish, they may thank themselves; their blood is upon their own heads.

CHAP. X.

The dissolving of the peculiar church-state of the Jews, and the rejection of that polity by the repealing of their ceremonial law; the vacating of all the institutions of it, the abolishing of their priesthood, the burning of their temple, and the taking away of their place and nation, and in their room the substituting and erecting of a catholic church-state among the Gentile nations; though to us now, when these things are long since done and completed, they may seem no greater matter; yet to them who lived when they were doing, who knew how high the Jews had stood in God's favour, and how deplorable the condition of the Gentile world had been for many ages, it appeared very great and marvellous, and a mystery hard to be understood. The apostle in this chapter, as in the foregoing and that which follows, is explaining and proving it; but with several very useful digressions, which a little interrupt the thread of his discourse. To two great truths I would reduce this chapter: (1.) That there is a great difference between the righteousness of the law, which the unbelieving Jews were wedded to, and the righteousness of faith offered in the gospel, ver. 1—11. (2.) That there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles; but in point of justification and acceptance with God, the gospel sets them both upon the same level, ver. 12, ad fin.

1. **B**RETHREN, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.
2. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.
3. For they being ignorant of Gods righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.
4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doth those things, shall live by them.
6. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above)
7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead)
8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach,
9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
10. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
11. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed.

The scope of the apostle, in this part of the chapter, is to shew the vast difference between the righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of faith; and the great preeminence of the righteousness of faith above that of the law; that he might induce and persuade the Jews to believe in Christ, aggravate the folly and sin of those that refused, and justify God in the rejection of such refusers.

1. Paul doth here profess his good affection to the Jews, with the reason of it. ver. 1. 2. Where he gives them a good wish, and a good witness.

(1.) A good wish, ver. 1. A wish that they might be saved; saved from the temporal ruin and destruction that was coming upon them; saved from the wrath to come, eternal wrath, which was hanging over their heads. It is implied in this wish, that they might be convinced and converted; he could not pray in faith, that they might be saved in their unbelief.

Though Paul preached against them, yet he prayed for them: herein he was merciful as God is, who is *not willing that any should perish*, 2 Pet. iii. 9. desires not the death of sinners. It is our duty, truly and earnestly to desire the salvation of the souls of others, next to the salvation of our own. This he saith was *his heart's desire and prayer*: which intimates,

First, The strength and sincerity of his desire; it was *his heart's desire*, it was not a formal compliment, as good wishes are with many from the teeth outward, but a real desire. This it

was, before it was his prayer. The soul of prayer is the heart's desire. Cold desires do but beg denials: we must even breathe out our souls in every prayer.

Secondly, The offering up of this desire to God. It was not only his heart's desire, but it was his *prayer*. There may be desires in the heart, and yet no prayer, unless those desires be presented to God. Wishing and woulding, if that be all, is not praying.

(2.) A good witness, as a reason of his good wish; ver. 2. *I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God.* The unbelieving Jews were the most bitter enemies Paul had in the world, and yet Paul gives them as good a character as the truth would bear. We should say the best we can even of our worst enemies; this is blessing them that curse us. Charity teacheth us to have the best opinion of persons, and to put the best construction upon words and actions that they will bear: We should take notice of that which is commendable even in bad people. *They have a zeal for God*: Their opposition to the gospel is from a principle of respect to the law, which they knew to have come from God. There is such a thing as a blind misguided zeal; such was that of the Jews, who when they hated Christ's people and ministers, and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. lxvi. 5. nay killed them, and thought they did *God good service*, John xvi. 2.

2. He here shews the fatal mistake that the unbelieving Jews were guilty of; which was their ruin. Their zeal was *not according to knowledge*. It is true, God gave them that law which they were so zealous for; but they might have known, that by the appearance of the promised Messiah, an end was put to it: He introduced a new religion and way of worship, to which the former must give place: he proved himself the Son of God, gave the most convincing evidence that could be of his being the Messiah; and yet they did not know, and would not own him, but shut their eyes against the clear light, so that their zeal for the law was blind. This he shews further, ver. 3. where we may observe,

(1.) The nature of their unbelief; they *have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*, i. e. they have not yielded to gospel-terms, nor accepted of the tender of justification by faith in Christ, which is made in the gospel. Unbelief is a non-submission to the righteousness of God, standing it out against the gospel-proclamation of indemnity. *Have not submitted*: In true faith, there is need of a great deal of submission; therefore the first lesson Christ teacheth, is to deny ourselves. It is a great piece of condescension for a proud heart to be content to be beholden to free grace; we are loth to sue *sub forma pauperis*.

(2.) The causes of their unbelief; and those are two.

First, Ignorance of God's *righteousness*. They did not understand, and believe, and consider the strict justice of God in hating and punishing sin, and demanding satisfaction; did not consider what need we have of a righteousness, wherein to appear before him: if they had, they would never have stood out against the gospel offer, nor expected justification by their own works, as if they could satisfy God's justice. Or, being ignorant of God's way of justification, which he has now appointed, and revealed by Jesus Christ. They did not know it, because they would not; they shut their eyes against the discoveries of it, and loved darkness rather.

Secondly, A proud conceit of their own righteousness; *going about to establish their own*, i. e. a righteousness of their own devising, and of their own working out, by the merit of their works, and by their observance of the ceremonial law. They thought they needed not to be beholden to the merit of Christ, and therefore depended upon their own performances as sufficient to make up a righteousness wherein to appear before God. They could not, with Paul, disclaim a dependence upon this, *Phil. iii. 9. Not having my own righteousness*. See an instance of this pride in the Pharisee, *Luke xviii. 10, 11. compare ver. 14.*

3. He here shews the folly of that mistake; and what an unreasonable thing it was for them to be seeking justification by the works of the law, now Christ was come, and had brought in an everlasting righteousness; considering,

1. The subserviency of the law to the gospel, ver. 4. *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness*. The design of the law was to lead people to Christ: the moral law was but for the searching of the wound; the ceremonial law for the shadowing forth of the remedy; but Christ is the end of both; see 2 Cor. iii. 7. and compare Gal. iii. 23, 24. The use of the law was to direct people for righteousness to Christ.

Christ is the end of the ceremonial law; he is the period of it, because he is the perfection of it: When the substance comes, the shadow is gone. The sacrifices, and offerings, and purifications appointed under the Old Testament, prefigured Christ, and pointed at him; and their inability to take away sin discovered the necessity of a sacrifice, that should, by being once offered, take away sin.

Christ is the end of the moral law, in that he did that which the law could not do, *Rom. viii. 3.* and secured the great end of it.

The end of the law was to bring men to perfect obedience, and so to obtain justification; this is now become impossible by reason of

of the power of sin, and the corruption of nature : but Christ is the end of the law ; the law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the lawgiver frustrated ; but full satisfaction being made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law, the end is attained, and we put in another way of justification. Christ is *thus the end of the law for righteousness*, i. e. for justification ; but it is only to *every one that believeth* ; upon our believing, i. e. our humble consent to the terms of the gospel, we become interested in Christ's satisfaction, and so are justified through the redemption that is in Jesus.

2. The excellency of the gospel above the law. This he proves, by shewing the different constitution of these two.

(1.) What is the righteousness which is of the law. This he shews, *ver. 5.* The tenor of it is, do and live. Though it direct us to a better and more effectual righteousness in Christ ; yet in itself, considered as a law, abstracted from its respect to Christ and the gospel, (for so the unbelieving Jews embraced and retained it) it owneth nothing as a righteousness sufficient to justify a man, but that of perfect obedience. For this he quotes that scripture, *Lev. xviii. 5. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them.* To this he refers likewise, *Gal. iii. 12. The man that doth them, shall live in them.*

Live, i. e. be happy, not only in the land of Canaan, but in heaven, of which Canaan was a type and figure. The doing supposed, must be perfect and sinless, without the least breach or violation. The law which was given upon mount Sinai, though it was not a pure covenant of works, for who then could be saved under that dispensation ? yet, that it might be the more effectual to drive people to Christ, and to make the covenant of grace welcome, it had a very great mixture of the strictness and terror of the covenant of works.

Now, was it not extreme folly in the Jews, to adhere so closely to this way of justification and salvation, which was in itself so hard, and by the corruption of nature now become impossible, when there was a new and a living way opened ?

(2.) What is that *righteousness* which is of *faith*, *ver. 6, &c.* This he describes in the words of Moses, in Deuteronomy, in the second law, (so Deuteronomy signifies) where there was a much clearer revelation of Christ and the gospel, than there was in the first giving of the law : he quotes it from *Deut. xxx. 11—14.* and shews.

First, That it is not at all hard or difficult. The way of justification and salvation has in it no such depths or knots as may discourage us, no insuperable difficulties attending it ; but as was foretold, it is a high-way, *Isa. xxxv. 8.* We are not put to climb for it, it is not in heaven ; we are not put to dive for it, it is not in the deep.

1. We need not go to heaven to search the records there, or to enquire into the secrets of the divine counsel. It is true, Christ is in heaven, but we may be justified and saved without going thither to fetch him thence, or sending a special messenger to him.

2. We need not go to the deep to fetch Christ out of the grave, or from the state of the dead. *Into the deep to bring up Christ from the dead* : This plainly shews, that Christ's descent into the deep, or into *hades*, was no more but his going into the state of the dead, in allusion to Jonah. It is true that Christ was in the grave, and it is as true that he is now in heaven ; but we need not perplex and puzzle ourselves with fancied difficulties, nor must we create to ourselves such gross and carnal ideas of these things, as if the method of salvation was impracticable, and the design of the revelation was only to amuse us. No, salvation is not put at so vast a distance from us.

Secondly, But it is very plain and easy : *The word is nigh thee.* When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving Christ, and feeding upon Christ ; it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean ; but Christ in the promise, Christ exhibited to us, and offered in the word. Christ is nigh thee, for the word is nigh thee : nigh thee indeed ; it is *in thy mouth, and in thy heart* ; there is no difficulty in understanding, believing, and owning of it. The work thou hast to do lies within thee ; *the kingdom of God is within you*, *Luke xvii. 21.* Thence thou must fetch thy evidences, not out of the records of heaven. *It is*, i. e. it is promised that it shall be, *in thy mouth*, *Isa. lix. 21. and in thy heart*, *Jer. xxxi. 33.* All that which is to be done for us, is already done to our hands : Christ is come down from heaven, we need not go to fetch him : He is come up from the deep, we need not perplex ourselves how to bring him up : There is nothing now to be done, but a work in us ; that must be our care, to look to our heart and mouth.

Those that were under the law, were to do all themselves, *Do this and live* ; but the gospel discovers the greatest of the work done already, and what remains cut short in righteousness ; salvation offered upon very plain and easy terms, brought to our door, as it were, in the word which is *nigh us*. It is in our mouth, we are reading it daily ; it is in our heart, we are or should be thinking of it daily.

Even the word of *faith* ; the gospel and the promise of it ; called the word of *faith*, 1. Because it is the object of faith, about which it is conversant, the word which we believe. 2. Because it is the precept of faith, commanding it, and making it the great con-

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dition of justification. 3. Because it is the ordinary means, by which faith is wrought and conveyed.

Now what is this *word of faith* ? We have the tenor of it, *ver. 9, 10.* the sum of the gospel, which is plain and easy enough. Observe,

1. What is promised to us : *Thou shalt be saved.* It is salvation that the gospel exhibits and tenders. Saved from guilt and wrath, with the salvation of the soul, an eternal salvation, which Christ is the author of, a Saviour to the uttermost.

2. Upon what terms. Two things required as conditions of salvation :

(1.) *Confessing the Lord Jesus* : Openly professing relation to him, and dependence on him, as our Prince and Saviour ; owning Christianity in the face of all the allurements and affrightments of this world, standing by him in all weathers. Our Lord Jesus lays a great stress upon this confessing of him before men ; see *Matth. x. 32, 33.* It is the product of many graces, evidenceth a great deal of self-denial, love to Christ, contempt of the world, a mighty courage and resolution. It was a very great thing especially when the profession of Christ and Christianity hazarded estate, honour, preferment, liberty, life, and all that is dear in this world ; which was the case in the primitive times.

(2.) *Believing in the heart, that God raised him from the dead.* The profession of faith with the mouth, if there be not the power of it in the heart, is but a mockery ; the root of it must be laid in an unfeigned assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ, especially concerning his resurrection, which is the fundamental article of the Christian faith ; for thereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and full evidence was given that God accepted his satisfaction.

This is further illustrated, *ver. 10.* and the order inverted, because there must first be faith in the heart, before there can be an acceptable confession with the mouth.

(1.) Concerning faith, it is *with the heart that man believeth* ; which implies more than an assent of the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere, and strong consent. It is not believing, not to be reckoned so, if it be not with the heart. This is unto *righteousness*. There is the righteousness of justification, and the righteousness of sanctification : Faith is to both ; it is the condition of our justification, *Rom. v. 1.* and it is the root and spring of our sanctification ; in it, it is begun ; by it, it is carried on, *Acts xv. 4.*

(2.) Concerning profession. It is with *the mouth that confession is made* ; confession to God in prayer and praise, *Rom. xv. 6.* Confession to men, owning the ways of God before others, especially when we are called to it in a day of persecution. It is fit God should be honoured with the mouth, for he made man's mouth, *Exod. iv. 11.* and at such a time has promised to give his faithful people a *mouth and wisdom*, *Luke xxi. 15.* It is part of the honour of Christ, that every tongue shall confess, *Phil. ii. 11.* And this is said to be unto *salvation* ; because it is the performance of the condition of that promise, *Matth. x. 32.* Justification by faith lays the foundation of our title to salvation ; but by confession we build upon that foundation, and come at last to the full possession of that, to which we were entitled.

So that we have here a brief summary of the terms of salvation ; and they are very reasonable ; in short this, that we must devote, dedicate, and give up to God our souls and our bodies ; our souls in believing with the heart, and our bodies in confessing with the mouth. This do, and thou shalt live. For this *ver. 11.* he quotes *Isa. xxviii. 16. Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed ;* *κατασχυθήσεται.* That is,

(1.) He will not be ashamed to own that Christ, in whom he trusts ; he that believes in the heart, will not be ashamed to confess with the mouth. It is sinful shame, that makes people deny Christ, *Mark viii. ult.* He that believeth, will not make haste ; so the prophet has it ; will not make haste to over-run the sufferings he meets with in the way of his duty ; will not be ashamed of a despised religion.

(2.) He shall not be ashamed of his hope in Christ ; he shall not be disappointed of his end. It is our duty that we must not, it is our privilege that we shall not be ashamed of our faith in Christ. He shall never have cause to repent his confidence in reposing such a trust in the Lord Jesus.

12. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. 13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. 14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? 15. And how shall they preach, except they be sent ? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things ! 16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report ? 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18. But I say, Have they

they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words into the ends of the world. 19. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are no people, and by a foolish nation* I will anger you. 20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

The first words express the design of the apostle through these verses, that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, but they stand upon the same level in point of acceptance with God. In Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, *Col. iii. 11.* God doth not save any, or reject any, because they are Jews, or because they are Greeks, but doth equally accept both upon gospel terms. *There is no difference.*

For the proof of this he urges two arguments.

1. That God is the same to all. *The same Lord over all is rich unto all.* There is not one God to the Jews that is more kind, and another to the Gentiles that is less kind; but he is the same to all, a common Father to all mankind. When he proclaimed his name, *The Lord, The Lord God, gracious and merciful,* he thereby signified not only what he was to the Jews, but what he is and will be to all his creatures that seek unto him. Not only good, but rich, plenteous in goodness; he hath wherewith to supply them all, and he is free and ready to give out to them; he is both able and willing: Not only rich, but *rich* unto us; liberal and bountiful in dispensing his favours. *To all that call upon him:* Something must be done by us, that we may reap of this bounty; and it is as little as can be, we must call upon him. He will for this be enquired of, *Ezek. xxxvi. 37.* and sure that which is not worth the asking, is not worth the having. We have nothing to do but to draw out by prayer, as there is occasion.

2. That the promise is the same to all, *ver. 13. Whoever shall call;* one as well as another, without exception. This extent, this undifferencing extent of the promise both to Jews and Gentiles, he thinks should not be surprizing, for it was foretold by the prophet, *Joel ii. 21.* Calling upon the name of the Lord is here put for all practical religion. What is the life of a Christian but a life of prayer? It implies a sense of our dependence on him, and entire dedication of ourselves to him, a believing expectation of our all from him. He that doth this shall be saved. It is but ask and have; what would we have more?

For the further illustration of this, he observes,

(1.) How necessary it was that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, *ver. 14, 15.* This was it that the Jews were so angry with Paul for, that he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. Now, he shews how needful it was to bring them within the reach of the forementioned promise, an interest in which they should not envy to any of their fellow creatures.

First, *They cannot call on him, in whom they have not believed.* Except they believe that he is God, they will not call upon him by prayer; to what purpose should they? The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the duty of prayer; we cannot pray aright, nor pray to acceptance without it. He that comes to God by prayer, must believe, *Heb. xi. 6.* Till they believed the true God, they were calling upon idols, *O Baal, hear us.*

Secondly, *They cannot believe in him of whom they have not heard.* Some way or other the divine revelation must be made known to us, before we can receive it, and assent to it; it is not born with us. In hearing is included reading, which is tantamount, and by which many are brought to believe, *John xx. ult. These things are written, that you may believe.* But, hearing only is mentioned, as the more ordinary and natural way of receiving information.

Thirdly, *They cannot hear without a preacher;* how should they? Some body must tell them what they are to believe. Preachers and hearers are correlates; it is a blessed thing when they mutually rejoice in each other; the hearers in the skill and faithfulness of the preacher, and the preacher in the willingness and obedience of the hearers.

Fourthly, *They cannot preach except they be sent,* i. e. except they be both commissioned, and in some measure qualified for their preaching work. How shall a man act as an ambassador, unless he have both his credentials and his instructions from the prince that sends him? This proves, that to the regular ministry there must be a regular mission and ordination. It is God's prerogative to send ministers; he is the Lord of the harvest, and therefore to him we must pray that he would send forth labourers, *Matth. ix. ult.* He only can qualify men for, and incline them to the work of the ministry: But the competency of that qualification, and the sincerity of that inclination, must not be left to the judgment of every man for himself: The nature of the thing will by no means admit that; but for the preservation of due order in the church, this must needs be referred and submitted to the judgment of a competent number of those that are themselves in that office, and of

approved wisdom and experience in it; who, as in all other callings, are presumed the most able judges; and who are empowered to set apart such as they find so qualified and inclined to this work of the ministry; that by this preservation of the succession, the name of Christ may endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven: And they that are thus set apart, not only *may*, but *must* preach, as those that are sent.

(2.) How welcome the gospel ought to be to those to whom it was preached; because it shewed the way to salvation, *ver. 15.* For this he quotes *Isa. lii. 7.* The like passage we have, *Nabum. i. 15.* which, if it point at the glad tidings of the deliverance of Israel out of Babylon in the type, yet it looks further to the gospel, i. e. the good news of our salvation by Jesus Christ. Observe,

First, What the gospel is: it is the *gospel of peace*: it is the word of reconciliation between God and man. *On earth peace,* *Luke ii. 14.* Or, peace is put in general for all good; so it is explained here; it is *glad tidings of good things*; the things of the gospel are good things indeed, the best things; tidings concerning them are the most joyful tidings, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth.

Secondly, What the work of ministers is; to *preach* this gospel, to *bring these glad tidings*; to evangelize peace, (so the original is) to evangelize good things. Every preacher is in this sense an evangelist: they are not only messengers to carry the news, but ambassadors to treat: and the first gospel-preachers were angels, *Luke ii. 16.*

Thirdly, How acceptable they should therefore be to the children of men, for their work's sake. *How beautiful are the feet!* i. e. how welcome are they. Mary Magdalen expressed her love to Christ, by kissing his feet, and after in holding him by the feet, *Mat. xxviii. 9.* And when Christ was sending forth his disciples, he washed their feet. Those that preach the gospel of peace, should see to it, that their *feet*, i. e. their life and conversation be beautiful: The holiness of ministers lives is the beauty of their feet. *How beautiful!* viz. in the eyes of them that hear them. Those that welcome the message, cannot but love the messengers. See *1 Theff. v. 12, 13.*

(3.) He answers an objection against all this, which might be taken from the small success which the gospel had in many places, *ver. 16.* *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.* All the Jews have not, all the Gentiles have not; for the greater part of both remain in unbelief and disobedience. Observe, The gospel is given us not only to be known and believed, but to be *obeyed*. It is not a system of notions, but a rule of practice. This little success of the word was likewise foretold by the prophet, *Isa. liii. 1.* *Who hath believed our report?* Very few have; few to what one would think should have believed it, considering how faithful a report it is, and how well worthy of all acceptance; very few to the many that persist in unbelief. It is no strange thing, but it is a very sad and uncomfortable thing, for the ministers of Christ to bring the report of the gospel, and not to be believed in it. Under such a melancholy consideration it is good for us to go to God, and make our complaint to him. *Lord, who hath, &c.*

In answer to this,

First, He shews that however the word preached is the ordinary means of working faith, *ver. 17.* *So then, &c.* however; though many that hear do not believe, yet those that believe have first heard. *Faith cometh by hearing.* It is the summary of what he had said before, *ver. 14.* The beginning, progress, and strength of faith, is by hearing. The word of God is therefore called the word of faith: it begets and nourisheth it: God gives faith, but it is by the word as the instrument. *Hearing*, i. e. that hearing which works faith, is *by the word of God*. It is not hearing the enticing words of man's wisdom, but hearing the word of God, that will befriend faith, and hearing it *as* the word of God. See *1 Theff. ii. 13.*

Secondly, That those who would not believe the report of the gospel, yet having heard it, they were thereby left inexcusable, and may thank themselves for their own ruin, *ver. 18. ad fin.*

1. The Gentiles have heard it, *ver. 18.* *Have they not heard?* Yes, more or less, they have; either heard the gospel, or however heard of it. *Their sound went into all the earth*; not only a confused sound, but their words, more distinct and intelligible notices of these things, are *gone into the ends of the world*. The commission which the apostles received, runs thus; *go ye into all the world, preach to every creature, disciple all nations*; and they did with indefatigable industry and wonderful success, pursue that commission. See the extent of Paul's province, *Rom. xv. 19.* To this remote island of Britain, one of the utmost corners of the world, not only the sound, but the words of the gospel came within a few years after Christ's ascension. It was in order to this, that the gift of tongues was at the very first poured so plentifully upon the apostles, *Acts ii.* In the expression here he plainly alludes to *Psal. xix. 4.* which speaks of the notices which the visible works of God in the creation give to all the world of the power and Godhead of the Creator. As under the Old Testament, God provided for the publishing of the work of creation, by the sun, moon, and stars; so now for the publishing of the work of redemption to all the world, by the preaching of gospel-ministers, who are therefore called stars.

2. The Jews have heard it too, *ver.* 19, 20, 21. For this he appeals to two passages of the Old Testament, to shew how inexcusable they are too. *Did not Israel know*, viz. that the Gentiles were to be called in? They might have known it from Moses and Isaiah.

(1.) One is taken from *Deut.* xxxii. 21. *I will provoke you to jealousy.* The Jews not only had the offer, but saw the Gentiles accepting of it, and advantaged by that acceptance, by the same token that they were vexed at it. They had the refusal: *To you first*, *Acts* iii. ult. In all places where the apostles came, still the Jews had the first offer, and the Gentiles had but their leavings: If one would not, another would. Now this provoked them to jealousy: They, as the elder brother in the parable, *Luke* xv. envied the reception and entertainment of the prodigal Gentiles, upon their repentance. The Gentiles are here called *no people, and a foolish nation*, i. e. not the professing people of God. How much soever there be of the wit and wisdom of the world, those that are not the people of God, are, and in the end will be, found to be a foolish people. Such was the state of the Gentile world, and yet made the people of God, and Christ to them the wisdom of God. What a provocation it was to the Jews to see the Gentiles taken into favour, we may see, *Acts* xiii. 45.—xvii. 5, 13. and especially *Acts* xxii. 22. It was an instance of the great wickedness of the Jews, that they were thus enraged; and this in Deuteronomy is the matter of a threatening. God often makes peoples sin their punishment. A man needs no greater plague than to be left to the impetuous rage of his own lusts.

(2.) Another is taken from *Isa.* lxi. 1, 2. which is very full, and in it *Esaiah* is *very bold*; bold indeed to speak so plainly of the rejection of his own countrymen. Those that will be found faithful, have need to be very bold: Those that are resolved to please God, must not be afraid to displease any man.

Now *Esaiah* speaks boldly and plainly,

1. Of the preventing grace and favour of God in the reception and entertainment of the Gentiles, *ver.* 20. *I was found of them that sought me not.* The prescribed method is, *seek and find*; that is a rule for us, not a rule for God, who is often found of those that do not seek. His grace is his own, differencing grace his own, and he dispenseth it in a way of sovereignty, gives or with-holds it at pleasure; prevents us with the blessings, the richest choicest blessings of his goodness. Thus he manifested himself to the Gentiles, by sending the light of the gospel among them, when they were so far from seeking him, and asking after him, that they were following after lying vanities, and serving dumb idols. Was not this our own particular case? Did not God begin in love, and manifest himself to us when we did not ask after him? And was not that a time of love indeed, to be often remembered with a great deal of thankfulness?

(2.) Of the obstinacy and perverseness of Israel, notwithstanding the fair offers and affectionate invitations they had, *ver.* 21. Observe,

First, God's great goodness to them: *All day long I have stretched forth my hands.* (1.) His offers. *I have stretched forth my hands*; offering them life and salvation with the greatest sincerity and seriousness that can be, with all possible expressions of earnestness and importunity; shewing them the happiness tendered, setting it before them with the greatest evidence, reasoning the case with them. Stretching forth the hands is the gesture of those that require audience, *Acts* xxvi. 1. or desire acceptance, *Prov.* i. 24. Christ was crucified with his hands stretched out. *Stretched forth my hands* as offering reconciliation; come let us shake hands, and be friends; and our duty is to give the hand to him, 2 *Chron.* xxx. 8. (2.) His patience in making these offers: *All day long.* The patience of God toward provoking sinners is admirable: He waits to be gracious. The time of God's patience is here called a day, lightsome as a day, and fit for work and business; but limited as a day, and a night at the end of it. He bears long, but he will not bear always.

Secondly, Their great badness to him. They were a *disobedient, gainsaying people*. One word in the Hebrew, in *Isaiah*, is here well explained by two; not only *disobedient* to the call, not yielding to it, but *gainsaying*, and quarrelling with it, which is much worse. Many that will not accept of a good proposal, yet will acknowledge that they have nothing to say against it: but the Jews who believed not, rested not there, but contradicted and blasphemed. God's patience with them was a very great aggravation of their disobedience, and rendered that the more exceeding sinful; as their disobedience did advance the honour of God's patience, and rendered that the more exceeding gracious. It is a wonder of mercy in God, that his goodness is not overcome by man's badness; and it is a wonder of wickedness in man, that his badness is not overcome by God's goodness.

C H A P. XI.

The apostle having reconciled that great truth of the rejection of the Jews with the promise made unto the fathers, is in this chapter farther labouring to mollify the harshness of it, and to reconcile it to the divine goodness in general. It might be said, Hath God then cast away his people? The apostle therefore sets himself in this chapter to make a return to this objection; and that two ways: 1. He shews at large what the mercy is, that is mixed with this wrath, ver. 1—32. 2. He infers from thence the infinite wisdom and sovereignty of God; with the adoration of which he concludes this chapter and subject, ver. 33—36.

1. **I** SAY then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 3. Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to my self seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. 7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded: 8. According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day. 9. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them. 10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. 11. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles: how much more their fulness? 13. For I speak to you Gentiles, in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? 16. For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 17. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree, were grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; 18. Boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. 21. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. 22. Behold therefore the goodness, and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23. And they also, if they bide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree? 25. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be



be come in. 26. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28. As concerning the gospel, *they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers sakes.* 29. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 30. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31. Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

The apostle proposes here a plausible objection, which might be urged against the divine conduct in casting off the Jewish nation, *ver. 1. Hath God cast away his people?* Is the rejection total and final? Are they all abandoned to wrath and ruin, and that eternal? Is the extent of the sentence so large, as to be without reserve? or the continuance of it so long, as to be without repeal? Will he have no more a peculiar people to himself?

In opposition to this, he shews, that there was a great deal of goodness and mercy expressed along with this seeming severity. particularly, he insists upon three things. 1. That though some of the Jews were cast off, yet they were not all so. 2. That though the body of the Jews were cast off, yet the Gentiles were taken in. And, 3. That though the Jews were cast off at present, yet in God's due time, they should be taken into his church again.

1. The Jews, it is true, were many of them cast off, but not all. The supposition of this he introduces with a *God forbid*. He will by no means endure such a suggestion. God had made a distinction between some and others of them.

First, There was a chosen remnant of believing Jews, that obtained righteousness and life by faith in Jesus Christ, *ver. 1—7.* These are said to be such as he *foreknew*, *ver. 2. i. e.* had thoughts of love to before the world was; for whom he thus foreknew he did predestinate. There lies the ground of the difference. They are called the *election*, *ver. 7. i. e.* the elect, God's chosen ones: Whom he calls the election, because that which first distinguished them from, and dignified them above others, was God's electing love. Believers are the *election*, all those, and those only, whom God hath chosen. Now,

(1.) He shews that he himself was one of them; *for I also am an Israelite*, q. d. Should I say that all the Jews are rejected, I should cut off my own claims, and see myself abandoned. Paul was a chosen vessel, *Acts ix. 15.* and yet he was of the *seed of Abraham*; and particularly of the tribe of Benjamin, the least and youngest of all the tribes of Israel.

(2.) He suggests, that, as in Elias's time, so now this chosen remnant was really more and greater than one would think it was: Which intimates likewise, that it is no new or unusual thing for God's grace and favour unto Israel to be limited and confined to a remnant of that people; for so it was in Elijah's time. The scripture saith it of Elias, *ἐν Ἡλίου*, in the story of Elias, the great reformer of the Old Testament. Observe,

First, His mistake concerning Israel; as if their apostasy in the days of Ahab was so general, that he himself was the only faithful servant God had in the world. He refers to *1 Kings xix. 14.* where (it is here said) *he maketh intercession to God against Israel.* A strange kind of intercession; *ἐντυγχάνει τῷ Θεῷ κατὰ τὴν ἰσχυρίαν*; *He deals with God against Israel*; so it may be read: So *ἐντυγχάνω* is translated, *Acts xxv. 24.* the Jews, *ἐνέτυχον μοι*, have dealt with me. In prayer we deal with God, commune with him, discourse with him: it is said of Elijah, *Jam. v. 17.* that he *prayed in praying*. We are then likely to pray in praying, to make a business of that duty, when we pray as those that are dealing with God in the duty. Now Elijah in this prayer spoke as if there were none left faithful in Israel but himself only. See to what a low ebb the profession of religion may sometimes be brought, and how much the face of it may be eclipsed, that the most wise and observing men may give it up for gone. So it was in Elijah's time. That which makes the shew of a nation, is the powers and the multitude. The powers of Israel were then persecuting powers: They have *killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars*, and they *seek my life*. The multitude of Israel were then idolatrous: *I am left alone*. Thus those few that were faithful to God, were not only lost in the croud of idolaters, but crushed and driven into corners by the rage of persecutors. *When the wicked rise, a man is hidden*, *Prov. xxviii. 12.*

Digged down thine altars; not only neglected them, and let them go out of repair, but digged them down. When altars were set up for Baal, it is no wonder if God's altars were pulled down; they could not endure that standing testimony against their idolatry.

This was his intercession *against Israel*; q. d. Lord, is not this a people ripe for ruin, worthy to be cast off? What else canst

thou do for thy great name? It is a very sad thing for any person or people to have the prayers of God's people *against* them; especially of God's prophets: for God doth espouse, and sooner or later will visibly own the cause of his praying people.

Secondly, The rectifying this mistake by the answer of God, *ver. 4. I have reserved*. Note, 1. Things are oftentimes much better with the church of God, than wise and good men think they are: They are ready to conclude hardly, and to give up all for gone, when it is not so. 2. In times of general apostasy, there is usually a remnant that keep their integrity; some, though but a few; all do not go one away. 3. That when there is a remnant who keep their integrity in times of general apostasy, it is God that reserves to himself that remnant: If he had left them to themselves, they had gone down the stream with the rest. It is his free and almighty grace, that makes the difference between them and others.

Seven thousand; a competent number to bear their testimony against the idolatry of Israel; and yet compared with the many thousands of Israel, a very small number: One of a city, and two of a tribe, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage. Christ's flock is but a little flock; and yet when they come all together at last, they will be a great and innumerable multitude, *Rev. vii. 9.*

Now the description of this remnant is, that *they have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal*. That was then the reigning sin of Israel: In court, city and country, Baal had the ascendant; and the generality of people, more or less, paid their respect to Baal. The best evidence of integrity is a freedom from the present prevailing corruptions of the times and places that we live in; to swim against the stream, when it is strong. Those God will own for his faithful witnesses, that are bold in bearing their testimony to the *present* truth, *2 Pet. i. 12.* this is thank-worthy; not to bow to Baal when every body bows. Sober singularity is commonly the badge of true sincerity.

Thirdly, The application of this instance to the case in hand, *ver. 5. 6. 7. Even so at this present time*. God's methods of dispensation towards his church are as they used to be. As it has been, so it is: In Elijah's time there was a remnant, and so there is now. If then there was a remnant left under the Old Testament, when the displays of grace were less clear, and the pourings out of the Spirit less plentiful; much more now under the gospel, when the grace of God that bringeth salvation appears more illustrious.

A remnant, i. e. a few of many; a remnant of believing Jews, when the rest were obstinate in their unbelief.

This is called *a remnant according to the election of grace*, i. e. they are such as were chosen from eternity in the counsels of divine love, to be vessels of grace and glory. Whom he did predestinate, them he called. If the difference between them and others be made purely by the grace of God, as certainly it is, (I have reserved them, saith he, to myself) then it must needs be according to the election; for we are sure, that whatever God doth, he doth it according to the counsel of his own will.

Now concerning this remnant, we may observe,

1. Whence it takes its rise; from the free grace of God, *ver. 6.* that grace which excludes works. The eternal election, in which the difference between some and others is first founded, is purely of grace, free grace; not for the sake of words done, or foreseen; if so, it would not be *grace*. *Gratia non est ullo modo gratia, si non sit omni modo gratuita*: It is not grace, properly so called, if it be not perfectly free. Election is purely according to the good pleasure of his will, *Eph. i. 5.* Paul's heart was so full of the freeness of God's grace, that in the midst of his discourse he turns aside, as it were, to make this remark, *If of grace, then not of works*. And some observe, that faith itself, which in the matter of justification is opposed to works, is here included in them; for faith has a peculiar receptivity to receive the free grace of God for our justification, but not to receive that grace for our election.

2. What it doth obtain: That which Israel, i. e. the body of that people, in vain sought for, *ver. 7. Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for*; i. e. justification, and acceptance with God; see *chap. ix. 31.* but the *election* has obtained it. And in them the promise of God hath its accomplishment, and God's antient kindness for that people is remembered. He calls the remnant of believers not the *elect*, but the *election*, to shew that the sole foundation of all their hopes and happiness is laid in election. They were the persons, whom God had in his eye in the counsels of his love, they are the election, they are God's choice.

Such was the favour of God to the chosen remnant. But,

Secondly, *The rest were blinded*, *ver. 7.* Some are chosen and called; and the call is made effectual: But others are left to perish in their unbelief; nay, they were made worse, by that which should have made them better: The gospel, which to them that believed was the favour of life unto life, to the unbelieving was the favour of death unto death: The same sun softens wax, and hardens clay. Good old Simeon foresaw, that the child Jesus was set for the fall as well as for the rising again of many in Israel, *Luke ii. 34.*

Were blinded; ἐπαρόυσαν, they were hardened: So some. They were seared, and made brawny and insensible. They could neither see the light, nor feel the touch of gospel-grace. Blindness and hardness are expressive of the same senselessness and stupidity of spirit. They shut their eyes, and would not see; that was their sin: And then God in a way of righteous judgment blinded their eyes, that they could not see; there was their punishment.

This seemed harsh doctrine: To qualify it therefore, he voucheth two witnesses out of the Old Testament, which speak of such a thing.

(1.) Isaiah; who spoke of such a judgment in his day, chap. xxix. 10. — vi. 9. The *spirit of slumber*, i. e. an indisposition to mind either their duty or interest. They are under the power of a prevailing unconcernedness, like people that are slumbering and sleeping; not affected with any thing that is said or done. They were resolved to continue as they were, and would not stir. The following words explain what is meant by the *spirit of slumber*; *eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear*: They had the faculties, but in the things that belonged to their peace, they had not the use of those faculties; they were quite infatuated, they saw Christ, but they did not believe in him; they heard his word, but they did not receive it; and so both their hearing and their seeing were in vain: It was all one, as if they had neither seen nor heard. Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the worst, and most to be dreaded, though they make the least noise.

Unto this day: Ever since Esaias prophesied, this hardening work hath been in the doing; some among them have been blind and senseless. Or rather, ever since the first preaching of the gospel: though they have had the most convincing evidences that could be of the truth of it, the most powerful preaching, the fairest offers, the clearest calls, from Christ himself, from his apostles; yet to this day they are blinded. It is still true concerning multitudes of them, even to this day in which we live; they are hardened, and blinded; the obstinacy and unbelief goes by succession, from generation to generation, according to their own fearful imprecation, which entailed the curse; *His blood be upon us, and upon our children*.

(2.) David, ver. 9, 10. quoted from *Psal.* lxxix. 22, 23. where David having in the Spirit foretold the sufferings of Christ from his own people the Jews, particularly that of their giving him *vinegar to drink*, ver. 21. which was literally fulfilled, *Matt.* xxvii. 48. an expression of the greatest contempt and malice that could be; in the next words, he doth, under the form of an imprecation, foretell the dreadful judgments of God upon them for it; *Let their table become a snare*: which the apostle here applies to the present blindness of the Jews, and the offence they took at the gospel, which increased their hardness.

This teacheth us how to understand other prayers of David against his enemies; they are to be looked upon as prophetic of the judgments of God upon the publick and obstinate enemies of Christ, and his kingdom. His prayer that it might be so, was a prophecy that it should be so, and not the private expressions of his own angry resentments. It was likewise intended to justify God, and to clear his righteousness in such judgments. He speaks here,

(1.) Of the ruin of their comforts: *Let their table be made a snare*, i. e. as the psalmist explains it, let that which should be for their welfare be a trap to them. The curse of God will turn meat into poison: It is a threatening like that, *Mal.* ii. 2. *I will curse your blessings*. Their table a snare, i. e. an occasion of sin, and an occasion of misery. Their very food that should nourish them shall choke them.

(2.) Of the ruin of their powers and faculties, ver. 10. their eyes darkened, their backs bowed down; that they can neither find the right way, nor, if they could, are they able to walk in it. The Jews after their national rejection of Christ and his gospel, became infatuated in their politicks, so that their very counsels turned against them, and hastened their ruin by the Romans. They looked like a people designed for slavery and contempt, their backs bowed down, to be ridden and trampled upon by all the nations about them.

Or, it may be understood spiritually, their backs are bowed down in carnality, and worldly-mindedness. *Curvæ in terris animæ*. They mind earthly things. This is an exact description of the state and temper of the present remainder of that people, than whom, if the accounts we have of them be true, there is not a more worldly, wilful, blind, selfish, ill-natured people in the world. They are manifestly to this day under the power of this curse: Divine curses will work long. It is a sign we have our eyes darkened, if we are bowed down in worldly-mindedness.

2. Another thing which qualified this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews was, that though they were cast off and unchurched, yet the Gentiles were taken in, ver. 11—14. which he applies by way of caution to the Gentiles, ver. 17—22.

(1.) The rejection of the Jews made room for the reception of the Gentiles: The Jews leavings was a feast for the poor Gentiles, ver. 11. *Have they stumbled, that they should fall?* Had God no other end in the forsaking and rejecting of them but

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their destruction? He startles at that, rejecting the thought with abhorrence, as usually he doth when any thing is suggested which seems to reflect upon the wisdom, or righteousness, or goodness of God; *God forbid*; no, through *their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles*. Not but that salvation might have come to the Gentiles, if they had stood; but by the divine appointment it was so ordered, that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles upon the Jews refusal of it. Thus in the parable, *Matth.* xxii. 8, 9. *They that were first bidden were not worthy; Go ye therefore into the highways*, Luke xiv. 21. And so it was in the history, *Acts* xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing you put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*; so *Acts* xviii. 6. God will have a church in the world, will have the wedding furnished with guests; and if one will not come, another will, or why was the offer made? The Jews had the refusal, and so the tender came to the Gentiles. See how infinite wisdom brings light out of darkness, good out of evil, meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong.

To the same purpose he saith, ver. 12. *The fall of them was the riches of the world*, i. e. it hastened the gospel so much the sooner into the Gentile world. The gospel is the greatest riches of the place where it is; it is better than thousands of gold and silver. Or, the riches of the Gentiles was the multitude of converts among them. True believers are God's jewels.

To the same purpose, ver. 15. *The casting away of them is the reconciling of the world*. God's displeasure towards them made way for his favour towards the Gentiles. God was in Christ *reconciling the world*, 2 Cor. v. 19. And therefore he took occasion from the unbelief of the Jews, openly to disavow and disown them, though they had been his peculiar favourites; to shew, that in dispensing his favours, he would now no longer act in such a way of peculiarity and restriction; but that in every nation, he that feared God, and wrought righteousness, should be accepted of him, *Acts* x. 34, 35.

(2.) The use that the apostle makes of this doctrine concerning the substitution of the Gentiles into the room of the Jews.

First, As a kinsman to the Jews, here is a word of excitement and exhortation to them; to stir them up to receive and embrace the gospel-offer. This God intended in his favour to the Gentiles, to provoke the Jews to jealousy, ver. 11. and Paul endeavours to enforce it accordingly, ver. 14. *If by any means I might provoke to emulation them which are my flesh*. Shall the despised Gentiles run away with all the comforts and privileges of the gospel, and shall not we forethink our refusal, and now at last put in for a share? Shall not we believe and obey, and be pardoned, and saved, as well as the Gentiles? See an instance of such an emulation in Esau, *Gen.* xxviii. 6, 7, 8, 9. There is a commendable emulation in the affairs of our souls; why should not we be as holy and happy, as any of our neighbours? In this emulation there needs no suspicion, undermining, or countermining; for the church hath room enough, and the new covenant, grace and comfort enough for us all. The blessings are not lessened by the multitudes of the sharers. *And might save some of them*. See what was Paul's business, to save souls; and yet the utmost he promiseth himself, is but to save *some*. Though he were such a powerful preacher, spoke and wrote with such evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, yet of the many he dealt with, he could but save *some*. Ministers must think their pains well bestowed, if they can but be instrumental to save *some*.

Secondly, As an apostle to the Gentiles, here is a word of caution for them. *I speak to you, Gentiles*. You believing Romans, you hear what riches of salvation are come to you by the fall of the Jews, but take heed lest you do any thing to forfeit it. Paul takes this, as other occasions, to apply his discourse to the Gentiles, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, appointed for the service of their faith, to plant and water churches in the Gentile nations. This was the purport of his extraordinary mission, *Acts* xxii. 21. *I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles*, compare *Acts* ix. 15. It was likewise the intention of his ordination, *Gal.* ii. 9. compare *Acts* xiii. 2.

It ought to be our great and special care to do good to those that are under our charge: we must particularly mind that which is our own work. It was an instance of God's great love to the poor Gentiles, that he appointed Paul, who in gifts and graces excelled all the apostles, to be the apostle of the Gentiles.

The Gentile world was a wider province; and the work to be done in it required a very able, skilful, zealous, courageous workman; such a one was Paul. God calls those to special work, that he either sees or makes fit for it.

I magnify mine office. There were those that vilified it, and him because of it. It was because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, that the Jews were so outrageous against him, *Acts* xxii. 21, 22. and yet he thought never the worse of it, though it set him up as the butt of all the Jewish rage and malice. It is a sign of true love to Jesus Christ, to reckon that service and work for him truly honourable, which the world looks upon with scorn, as mean and contemptible. The office of the ministry is an office to be *magnified*. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, and for their work's sake are to be esteemed highly in love.

My office; τὴν διακονίαν μου, my ministry, my service, not my lordship and dominion. It was not the dignity and power, but the duty and work of an apostle, that Paul was so much in love with.

Now, two things he exhorts the Gentiles to, with reference to the rejected Jews.

1. To have a respect for the Jews notwithstanding, and to desire their conversion. This is intimated in the prospect he gives them of the advantage that would accrue to the church by their conversion, *ver.* 12, 15. It would be as life from the dead; and therefore they must not insult and triumph over those poor Jews, but rather pity them, and desire their welfare, and long for the receiving of them in again.

2. To take heed to themselves, lest they should stumble and fall as the Jews had done, *ver.* 17—22. Where observe,

(1.) The privilege which the Gentiles had by being taken into the church. They were grafted in, *ver.* 17. as a branch of a wild olive into a good olive; which is contrary to the way and custom of the husbandman, who grafts the good olive into the bad; but those that God grafts into the church, he finds wild and barren and good for nothing. Men graft to mend the tree, but God grafts to mend the imp.

First, The church of God is an olive-tree; flourishing and fruitful as an olive, *Psal.* lii. 8. *Hos.* xiv. 6. The fruit useful, for the honour both of God and man, *Judg.* ix. 9.

Secondly, Those that are out of the church, are as *wild olive-trees*; not only useless, but what they do produce is sour and unfavoury. *Wild by nature*, *ver.* 24. This was the state of the poor Gentiles, that wanted church-privileges, and in respect of real sanctification; and it is the natural state of every one of us to be *wild by nature*.

Thirdly, Conversion is the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive. We must be cut off from the old stock, and be brought into union with a new root.

Fourthly, Those that are grafted into the good olive-tree, do partake of the root and fatness of the olive. It is applicable to a saving union with Christ; all that are by a lively faith grafted into Christ, partake of him as the branches of the root; receive from his fulness. But it is here spoken of a visible church-membership, from which the Jews were as branches broken off; and so the Gentiles were grafted in, ἐν αὐτοῖς, among them that continued, or in the room of them that were broken off.

The Gentiles being grafted into the church, partake of the same privileges that the Jews did, *the root and fatness*. The olive-tree is the visible church, called so *Jer.* xi. 16. the root of this tree was Abraham; not the root of communication, so Christ only is the root; but the root of administration, he being the first with whom the covenant was so solemnly made. Now the believing Gentiles partake of this root; *he also is a son of Abraham*, *Luke* xix. 9. *the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles*, *Gal.* iii. 14. the same fatness of the olive-tree, the same for substance, special protection, lively oracles, means of salvation, a standing ministry, instituted ordinances; and, among the rest, the visible church-membership of their infant seed, which was part of the fatness of the olive-tree that the Jews had, and cannot be imagined to be denied to the Gentiles.

(2.) A caution not to abuse these privileges.

1. Be not proud, *ver.* 18. *Boast not against the branches*. Do not therefore trample upon the Jews as a reprobate people; nor insult over them that are broken off, much less over those that do continue. Grace is given, not to make us proud, but to make us thankful. The law of faith excludes all boasting, either of ourselves, or against others. Do not say, *ver.* 19. *they were broken off, that I might be grafted in*, i. e. do not think that thou didst merit more at the hand of God than they, or didst stand higher in his favour.

But remember, *thou bearest not the root, but the root thee*; though thou art grafted in, thou art still but a branch born by the root; nay, and an engrafted branch, brought into the good olive *contrary to nature*, *ver.* 24. not free-born, but by an act of grace enfranchised and naturalized. Abraham, the root of the Jewish church, is not beholden to thee; but thou art greatly obliged to him, as the trustee of the covenant, and the father of many nations. Therefore, *if thou boast*, know (that word must be supplied to clear the sense) *thou bearest not the root, but the root thee*.

2. Be not secure, *ver.* 20. *Be not high-minded, but fear*. Be not too confident of your own strength and standing. A holy fear is an excellent preservative against high mindedness: happy is the man that thus feareth always. We need not fear but God will be true to his word; all the danger is lest we be false to ours: *Let us therefore fear*, *Heb.* iv. 1. The church of Rome now boasts of a patent of perpetual preservation; but the apostle here in his epistle to that church, when she was in her infancy and integrity, enters an express caveat against that boast, and all claims of that kind.

Fear what? Why fear lest thou commit a forfeiture, as they have done; lest thou lose the privileges thou now enjoyest, as they have lost theirs. Others harms should be our warnings. Go (saith God to Jerusalem, *Jer.* vii. 12.) and *see what I did to Shiloh*; so now, let all the churches of God go see what he did to Jerusalem,

and what is become of the day of their visitation; that we may hear and fear, and take heed of Jerusalem's sin. The patent, which churches have of their privileges, is not for a certain term, or entailed upon them and their heirs; but it runs as long as they carry themselves well, and no longer.

Consider, 1. How they were broken off: It was not undeservedly, by an act of absolute sovereignty and prerogative, but *because of unbelief*. It seems then it is possible for churches that have long stood by faith, to fall into such a state of infidelity, as may be their ruin. Their unbelief did not only provoke God to cut them off, but they did by that cut themselves off: it was not only the meritorious, but the formal cause of their separation. Now, thou art liable to the same infirmity and corruption that they fell by. Further observe, they were *natural branches*, *ver.* 21. not only interested in Abraham's covenant, but descending from Abraham's loins; and so born upon the promises, and thence had a kind of tenant-right; yet when they sunk into unbelief, God did *not spare them*. Prescription, long usage, the faithfulness of their ancestors, would not secure them. It was in vain to plead, though they insisted much upon it, that they were Abraham's seed, *Matth.* iii. 9. *John* viii. 33. It is true, they were the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was first let out; but when they forfeited it, it was justly taken from them, *Matth.* xxi. 41, 43.

This is called here *severity*, *ver.* 22. God laid righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet, and dealt with them according to their sins. Severity is a word that sounds harsh; and I do not remember, that it is any where else in scripture ascribed to God; and it is here applied to the unchurching of the Jews. God is most severe towards those that have been in profession nearest to him, if they rebel against him, *Amos* iii. 2. Patience and privileges abused, turn to the greatest wrath. Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the forest; for of those he is here speaking, *ver.* 8.

2. How thou standest; thou that art engrafted in. He speaks to the Gentile churches in general; though perhaps tacitly reflecting on some particular person, who might have expressed some such pride and triumph in the Jews rejection. Consider then,

(1.) By what means thou standest; *by faith*, which is a depending grace, and fetcheth in strength from heaven: Thou dost not stand in any strength of thy own, of which thou mightest be confident; thou art no more than the free grace of God makes thee; and his grace is his own, which he gives or with-holds at pleasure. That which ruined them was unbelief, and by faith thou standest; therefore thou hast no satter hold than they had, thou standest on no firmer a foundation than they did.

(2.) On what terms, *ver.* 22. *Towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness*, i. e. continue in a dependence upon, and compliance with, the free grace of God, the want of which it was that ruined the Jews; if thou be careful to keep up thine interest in the divine favour, by being continually careful to please God, and fearful of offending him. The sum of our duty, the condition of our happiness, is to keep ourselves in the love of God, *Fear the Lord, and his goodness*, *Hos.* iii. ult.

3. Another thing that qualified this doctrine of the Jews rejection is, that though for the present they are cast off, yet the rejection is not final; but when the fulness of time is come, they will be taken in again. They are not cast off for ever; but mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath. Let us observe,

(1.) How this conversion of the Jews is here described.

First, It is said to be *their fulness*, *ver.* 12. i. e. the addition of them to the church, the filling up again of that place, which became vacant by their rejection. This would be the enriching of the world, i. e. the church in the world, with a great deal of light and strength, and beauty.

Secondly, It is called the *receiving of them*. The conversion of a soul is the receiving of that soul, so the conversion of a nation. They shall be received into favour, into the church, into the love of Christ, whose arms are stretched out for the receiving of all those that will come to him.

And this will be as *life from the dead*; so strange and surprising, and yet withal so welcome and acceptable. The conversion of the Jews will bring great joy to the church. See *Luke* xv. ult. *He was dead, and is alive*; and therefore *it was meet we should make merry and be glad*.

Thirdly, It is called the *grafting of them in again*, *ver.* 23. into the church, from which they had been broken off. That which is grafted in, receives sap and virtue from the root; so doth a soul, that is truly grafted into the church, receive life, and strength, and grace, from Christ the quickening root.

They shall be *grafted into their own olive-tree*, *ver.* 24. i. e. into the church, which formerly they had been the most eminent and conspicuous members of; to retrieve these privileges of visible church-membership, which they had so long enjoyed, but have now sinned away, and forfeited by their unbelief.

Fourthly, It is called, the *saving of all Israel*, *ver.* 26. True conversion may well be called salvation; it is salvation begun. See *Acts* ii. ult. the adding of them to the church is the saving of them: τὰς σωζόμενους, in the present tense, *are saved*. When conversion-work goes on, salvation-work goes on.

(2.) What it is grounded upon, and what reason we have to look for it.

First, Be-

First, Because of the holiness of the *first-fruits* and the *root*, *ver. 16.* Some by the *first-fruits* understand those of the Jews, that were already converted to the faith of Christ, and received into the church; which were, as the first-fruits, dedicated to God, as earnest of a more plentiful and sanctified harvest: A good beginning promises a good ending. Why may we not suppose, that others may be savingly wrought upon, as well as those who are already brought in? Others, by the first-fruits understand the same with the root, *viz.* the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom the Jews descended, and with whom, as the prime trustees, the covenant was deposited: And so they were the root of the Jews, not only as a people, but as a church. Now, if they were *holy*, which is not meant so much of inherent as of federal holiness; if they were in the church and in the covenant, then we have reason to conclude, that God hath a kindness for the *lump*, i. e. the body of that people; and for the *branches*, i. e. the particular members of it. The Jews are in a sense a holy nation, *Exod. xix. 6.* being descended from holy parents. Now it cannot be imagined, that such a holy nation should be totally and finally cast off.

This proves that the seed of believers, as such, are within the pale of the visible church, and within the verge of the covenant, till they do, by their unbelief, throw themselves out; for, *if the root be holy, so are the branches.* Though real qualifications be not propagated, yet relative privileges are: Though a wife man do not beget a wife man, yet a free man begets a free man. Though grace doth not run in the blood, yet external privileges do (till they are forfeited) even to a thousand generations. Look how they will answer it another day, that cut off the entail, by turning the seed of the faithful out of the church, and so not allowing the blessing of Abraham to come upon the Gentiles. The Jewish branches are reckoned *holy*, because the root was so.

This is expressed more plainly, *ver. 28.* *They are beloved for the fathers sakes.* In this love to the fathers, the first foundation of their church-state was laid, *Deut. iv. 37.* *Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them.* And the same love would revive their privileges, for still the ancient loving kindness is remembered; they are *beloved for the fathers sakes*: It is God's usual method of grace. Kindness to the children for the fathers sake is therefore called the *kindness of God*, *2 Sam. ix. 3, 7.*

Though, as concerning the gospel, *viz.* in the present dispensation of it, they are enemies to it *for your sakes*, i. e. for the sake of the Gentiles, against whom they have such an antipathy; yet, when God's time is come, that will wear off, and God's love to their fathers will be remembered. See a promise that points at this, *Lev. xxvi. 42.* The iniquity of the fathers is visited but to the third and fourth generation; but there is mercy kept for thousands. Many fare the better for the sake of their godly ancestors.

It is upon this account, that the church is called their own *olive-tree*. Long it had been their own peculiar; which is some encouragement to us to hope, that there may be room for them in it again, for old acquaintance sake. That which hath been, may be again.

Though particular persons and generations wear off in unbelief, yet there having been a national church-membership, though for the present suspended, yet we may expect that it will be revived again.

Secondly, Because of the power of God, *ver. 23.* *God is able to graft them in again.* The conversion of souls is a work of almighty power; and when they seem most hardened, and blinded, and obstinate, our comfort is, that God is able to work a change, able to graft those in that have been long cast out and withered. When the house is kept by the strong man armed, with all his force; yet God is stronger than he, and is able to dispossess him.

The condition of their restoration is faith; *If they abide not still in unbelief.* So that nothing is to be done but to remove that unbelief, that is the great obstacle; and God is able to take that away, though nothing less than an almighty power will do it; the same power that raised up Christ from the dead, *Eph. i. 19, 20.* Otherwise, Can these dry bones live?

Thirdly, Because of the grace of God manifested to the Gentiles. Those that have themselves experienced the grace of God, preventing, distinguishing grace, may, from thence, take encouragement to hope well concerning others. This is his argument, *ver. 24.* If thou wert grafted into a good olive, that was wild by nature, much more shall these that were the natural branches, and may therefore be presumed somewhat nearer to the divine acceptance.

This is a suggestion very proper to check the insolence of those Gentile Christians, that looked with disdain and triumph upon the condition of the rejected Jews, and trampled upon them; *q. d.* Their condition, as bad as it is, is not so bad as yours was before your conversion; and therefore why may it not be made as good as yours is? This is his argument, *ver. 30, 31.* *As ye in time past have not, &c.* It is good for those that have found mercy with God, to be often thinking what they were in time past, and how they obtained that mercy. This would help to soften

our censures of, and quicken our prayers for, those that still continue in unbelief.

He argues further from the occasion of the Gentiles call, *viz.* the unbelief of the Jews; thence it took rise: *You have obtained mercy through their unbelief*; much more shall they obtain mercy through your mercy. If the putting out of their candle was the lighting of yours, by that power of God, who brings good out of evil; much more shall the continued light of your candle, when God's time is come, be a means of lighting theirs again.

That through your mercy they might obtain mercy, i. e. that they may be beholden to you, as you have been to them. He takes it for granted, that the believing Gentiles would do their utmost endeavour to work upon the Jews; that when God had persuaded Japhet, he would be labouring to persuade Shem. True grace hates monopolies. Those that have found mercy themselves, should endeavour that through their mercy others also may obtain mercy.

Fourthly, Because of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, which point at this. He quotes a very remarkable one, *ver. 26.* from *Isa. lix. 20, 21.* Where we may observe,

1. The coming of Christ promised: *There shall come out of Zion the deliverer.* Jesus Christ is the great deliverer, which supposes mankind in a state of misery and danger. In Isaiah, it is, *the redeemer shall come to Zion.* There he is called the *redeemer*; here, the *deliverer*; he delivers in a way of redemption, by a price. There he is said to come to Zion, because when the prophet prophesied, he was yet to come into the world, and Zion was his first head-quarters; thither he came, there he took up his residence: But when the apostle wrote this, he was come, he had been in Zion; and he is speaking of the fruits of his appearing, which shall come out of Zion; from thence, as from the spring, issued forth those streams of living water, which, in the everlasting gospel watered the nations. *Out of Zion went forth the law*, *Isa. ii. 3.* compare *Luke xxiv. 47.*

2. The end and purpose of his coming: *He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Christ's errand into the world was to turn away ungodliness, to turn away the guilt by the purchase of pardoning mercy, and to turn away the power by the pouring out of renewing grace: To save his people from their sins, *Matt. i. 21.* to part betwixt us and our sins; that iniquity might not be our ruin, and that it might not be our ruler.

Especially to turn it away from Jacob; which is that, for the sake of which he quotes the text, as a proof of the great kindness God intended for the seed of Jacob. What greater kindness could he do them, than to turn away ungodliness from them? to take away that which comes between them and all happiness? take away sin, and then make way for all good. This is the blessing that Christ was sent to bestow upon the world, and to tender it to the Jews in the first place, *Acts iii. ult.* to turn people from their iniquities.

In Isaiah it is, *The redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob*; which shews who in Zion were to have a share in, and to reap benefit by the deliverance promised, those, and those only, that leave their sins, and turn to God; to them Christ comes as a redeemer, but as an avenger to them that persist in impenitence. See *Deut. xxx. 2, 3.* Those that turn from sin, will be owned as the true citizens of Zion, *Eph. ii. 19.* the right Jacob, *Psal. xxiv. 4, 6.* *John i. 4.* Putting both these readings together, we learn, that none have an interest in Christ, but those that turn from their sins, nor can any turn from their sins, but by the strength of the grace of Christ.

For this is my covenant with them; this, that the deliverer shall come to them; this, that my Spirit shall not depart from them, as it follows, *Isa. lix. 21.* God's gracious intentions concerning Israel, were made the matter of a covenant, which the God, that cannot lye, could not but be true and faithful to. They were the children of the covenant, *Acts iii. 25.* The apostle adds, when *I shall take away their sins*; which some think refers to *Isa. xxvii. 9.* or, only to the foregoing words, to turn away ungodliness. Pardon of sin is laid as the foundation of all the blessings of the new covenant, *Heb. viii. 12.* *For I will be merciful.* Now from all this he infers, That certainly God had great mercy in store for that people, something answerable to the extent of these rich promises: And he proves his inference, *ver. 29.* by this truth, *For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.* Repentance is sometimes taken for a change of mind, and so God never repents, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Sometimes for a change of way, and that is here understood; intimating the constancy and unchangeableness of that love of God, which is founded in election. Those gifts and callings are immutable; whom he so loves, he loves to the end. We find God repenting that he had given man a being, *Gen. vi. 6.* *It repented the Lord that he had made man*; and repenting that he had given a man honour and power, *1 Sam. xv. 11.* *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king*: But we never find God repenting that he had given a man grace, or effectually called him; those gifts and callings are without repentance.

(3.) The time and extent of this conversion, when and where it is to be expected. It is called a *mystery*, *ver. 25.* that which was not obvious, and which one would not expect upon the view

of the present state of that people ; who appeared generally so obstinate against Christ and Christianity, that it was a riddle to talk of their unanimous conversion. The conversion of the Gentiles is called mystery, *Eph. iii. 3, 6, 9.* The case of the rejected Jews seemed as bad now, as that of the Gentiles had been. The work of conversion is carried on in a mystery. Now, he would have them know so much of this mystery, as to keep them humble, lest you be wise in your own conceit, i. e. lest you be too much puffed up with your church-membership, and trample upon the Jews. Ignorance is the cause of our self-conceit. *I would not have you ignorant, lest you be wise in your own conceits.* Observe,

First, Their present state. *Blindness, in part, is happened to Israel.* Here is something to qualify it, that it is but in part ; there is a remnant, that see the things that belong to their peace ; though part, the far greater part, are in blindness, *ver. 7, 8.*

To the same purpose, *ver. 32. God has concluded them all in unbelief ;* shut them up as in a prison ; given them over to their own hearts lusts. Shutting up, is sometimes put for conviction, as *Gal. iii. 22. q. d. they all stand before God, convicted of unbelief.* They would not believe, why then (saith God) you shall not. They peremptorily refused to submit to Christ and his government ; which refusal of theirs was, as it were, entered upon record in the court of heaven, and was conclusive against them.

Secondly, When this blessed change should be ; when the *fulnes of the Gentiles shall come in*, i. e. when the gospel has had its intended success, and made its progress in the Gentile world, compare *ver. 12.* The Jews shall continue in blindness, till God hath performed his whole work among the Gentiles, and then their turn will come next to be remembered. This was the purpose and ordination of God, for wise and holy ends ; things should not be ripe for the Jews conversion, till the church was replenished with the Gentiles ; that it might appear, that God's taking them again, was not because he had need of them, but of his own free grace.

Thirdly, The extent of it. *All Israel shall be saved, ver. 36.* He will have mercy upon all, *ver. 32.* Not every individual person, but the body of the people. Not that ever they should be restored to their covenant of peculiarity again, to have their priesthood, and temple, and ceremonies again ; an end is put to all those things ; but they should be brought to believe in Christ the true Messiah, whom they crucified, and be incorporated in the Christian church, and become one sheep-fold with the Gentiles under Christ the great shepherd.

But the question is, concerning the accomplishment of all this.

1. Some think it is done already ; when before, and in, and after, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, multitudes of the Jews were convinced of their infidelity, and turned Christians ; so many, that considering how many millions of them were cut off in the destruction, we may reasonably conclude, that of those which survived, the greater part were Christian, and embodied in the Christian church ; and it was a very inconsiderable number that persisted obstinate. For many ages Judea had, as other Christian provinces, their ministers and churches, and a face of religion. And most of this work, they suppose, was done towards the close of the ministry of the apostles, when the Gentiles were generally come in.

2. Others think, that it is yet to have its accomplishment towards the end of the world ; that those Jews which yet wonderfully remain distinct from the rest of the nations, by their names, customs, and religion, and are very numerous, especially in the Levant parts, shall, by the working of the Spirit with the word, be convinced of their sin, and brought generally to embrace the Christian faith, and to join in with the Christian churches ; which will contribute much to their strength and beauty. Alas ! who shall live, when God doth this ?

33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor ? 35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? 36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

The apostle having insisted so largely through the greatest part of this chapter, upon reconciling the rejection of the Jews with the divine goodness, he concludes here with the acknowledgment and admiration of the divine wisdom and sovereignty in all this. Here the apostle doth, with great affection and awe, adore,

1. The secrecy of the divine counsels. *O the depth !* in these proceedings towards the Jews and Gentiles ; or, in general, the whole mystery of the gospel, which we cannot fully comprehend. *The riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God*, i. e. the abundant instances of his wisdom and knowledge, in the contriving and

carrying on of the work of our redemption by Christ ; a depth which the angels pry into, *1 Pet. i. 12.* Much more may it puzzle any human understanding to give an account of the methods and reasons, and designs, and reaches of it. Paul was as well acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of God, as ever any mere man was ; and yet he confesseth himself at a loss in the contemplation ; and despairing to find the bottom, he humbly sits down at the brink, and adores the depth. Those that know most in this state of imperfection, cannot but be most sensible of their own weakness and short-sightedness ; and that after all their searches, and all their attainments in those searches, while they are here, they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. Praise is silent to thee, *Psal. lxxv. 1.*

The depth of the riches. Mens riches, of all kinds, are shallow, you may soon see the bottom : but God's riches are deep, *Psal. xxxvi. 6. Thy judgments are a great deep.* There is not only depth in the divine counsels, but riches too ; which notes an abundance of that which is precious and valuable ; so complete are the dimensions of the divine counsels, they have not only depth and height, but breadth and length, *Eph. iii. 18.* and that passing knowledge, *ver. 19.*

Riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. His seeing of all things by one clear, and certain, and infallible view ; all things that are, or ever were, or ever shall be ; that all is naked and open before him ; there is his knowledge. His ruling and ordering of all things, directing and disposing of them to his own glory, and the bringing about of his own purposes and counsels in all ; that is his wisdom. And the vast reach of both these is such a depth, as is past our fathoming, and we may soon lose ourselves in the contemplation of them. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, *Psal. cxxxix. 6.* compare *ver. 17, 18.*

How unsearchable are his judgments ! i. e. his counsels and purposes : And his ways, i. e. the execution of these counsels and purposes. We know not what he designs ; when the wheels are set in motion, and providence hath begun to work, yet we know not what he drives at ; it is past finding out. This doth not only overturn all our positive conclusions about the divine counsels, but it also checks all our curious enquiries.

Secret things belong not to us, *Deut. xxix. 29.* God's way is in the sea, *Psal. lxxvii. 19.* compare *Job xxiii. 8, 9. Psal. xcvi. 2.* What he doth, we know not now, *John xiii. 7.* We cannot give a reason of God's proceedings, nor by searching find out God. See *Job v. 9.—ix. 10.* The judgments of his mouth, and the way of our duty, blessed be God, is plain and easy, it is a high-way ; but the judgments of his hands, and the ways of his providence, are dark and mysterious, which therefore we must not pry into, but silently adore and acquiesce in.

The apostle speaks this here, especially with reference to that strange turn, the casting off of the Jews, and the entertainment of the Gentiles, with a purpose to take in the Jews again in due time ; these were strange proceedings, the choosing of some, the refusing of others, and neither according to the probabilities of human conjecture : Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes. These are methods unaccountable, concerning which we must say, O the depth !

Past finding out, ἀνεξιχνίατος, cannot be traced. God leaves no prints or footsteps behind him, doth not make a path to shine after him ; but his paths of providence are new every morning ; he doth not go the same way so oft as to make a track of it. *How little a portion is heard of him ? Job vi. ult.* It follows, *ver. 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord ?* Is there any creature made of his cabinet-council, or laid, as Christ was, in the bosom of the Father ? Is there any, to whom he has imparted his counsels, or that is able, upon the view of his providences, to know the way that he takes ? There is that vast distance and disproportion between God and man, between the Creator and the creature, as doth for ever exclude the thought of such an intimacy and familiarity.

The apostle makes the same challenge, *1 Cor. ii. 16. For who hath known the mind of the Lord ?* And yet there he adds, *But we have the mind of Christ :* Which intimates, that through Christ, true believers, that have his Spirit, know so much of the mind of God, as is necessary to their happiness. He that did know the mind of the Lord, he has declared him, *John i. 18.* And so, though we know not the mind of the Lord, yet, if we have the mind of Christ, we have enough. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, Psal. xxv. 14.* Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do ? See *John xv. 15.*

Or who has been his counsellor ? He needs no counsellor, for he is infinitely wise ; nor is any creature capable of being his counsellor ; that would be like lighting a candle to the sun. This seems to refer to that scripture, *Isa. xl. 13, 14. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord ? or being his counsellor, has taught him ? with whom took he counsel ? &c.* It is the substance of God's challenge to Job concerning the work of creation, *Job xxxviii.* and is applicable to all the methods of his providence. It is nonsense for any man to prescribe to God, or to teach him how to govern the world.

2. The sovereignty of the divine counsels. In all these things God acts as a free agent, doth what he will, because he will, and

giveth not account of any of his matters, *Job xxiii. 13.* — *xxxiii. 13.* and yet there is no unrighteousness with him. To clear which,

First, He challengeth any to prove God a debtor to him, *ver. 35.* *Who hath first given to him?* Who is there, of all the creatures, that can prove, that God is beholden to him? Whatever we do for him, or devote to him, it must be with that acknowledgment; which is for ever an estoppel to such demands, *1 Chron. xxix. 14.* *Of thine own we have given thee.* All the duties we can perform, are not requitals, but restitutions rather.

If any can prove that God is their debtor, the apostle here stands bound for the payment, and proclaims, in God's name, that payment is ready, *it shall be recompensed to him again.* It is certain, God will let no body lose by him: but never any one yet durst make a demand of this kind, or attempt to prove it.

This is here suggested, to silence the clamours of the Jews. When God took away their visible church-privileges from them, he did but take his own; and may he not do what he will with his own? give or with-hold his grace, where and when he pleases? To silence likewise the insultings of the Gentiles: When God sent the gospel among them, and gave so many of them grace and wisdom to accept of it, it was not because he owed them so much favour, or that they could challenge it as a debt, but of his own good pleasure.

Secondly, He resolves all into the sovereignty of God, *ver. 36.* *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things,* i. e. God is all in all. All things in heaven and earth, especially those things which relate to our salvation, the things that belong to our peace, they are all of him by way of creation, *through him* by way of providential influence, that they may be *to him* in their final tendency and result. Of God, as the spring and fountain of all; through Christ, God-man, as the conveyance; to God, as the ultimate end. These three include, in general, all God's causal relations to his creatures; of him, as the first efficient; *through him*, as the supreme dirigent; *to him*, as the ultimate final cause; for the Lord hath made all for himself, *Rev. iv. 11.*

If all be of him, and *through him*, there is all the reason in the world, that all should be *to him*, and *for him*. It is a necessary circulation; if the rivers receive their waters from the sea, they return them to the sea again, *Ecc. i. 7.* To do all to the glory of God, is to make a virtue of necessity; for all shall in the end be *to him* whether we will or no.

And so he concludes with a short doxology, *To whom be glory for ever. Amen.* God's universal agency as the first cause, the sovereign ruler, and the last end, ought to be the matter of our adoration. Thus all his works do praise him objectively; but his saints do bless him actively; they hand that praise to him, which all the creatures do minister matter for, *Psal. cxlv. 10.*

He had been discoursing at large of the counsels of God concerning man, sifting the point with a great deal of accuracy; but, after all, he concludes with the acknowledgement of the divine sovereignty, as that into which all these things must be ultimately resolved, and in which alone the mind can safely and sweetly rest. This is, if not the scholastical way, yet the Christian way of disputation: Whatever are the premisses, let God's glory be the conclusion; especially when we come to talk of the divine counsels, and actings, it is best for us to turn our arguments into awful and serious adorations. The glorified saints, that see furthest into these mysteries, never dispute, but praise to eternity.

C H A P. XII.

The apostle having at large cleared and confirmed the prime fundamental doctrines of Christianity, comes in the next place to press the principal duties. We mistake our religion, if we look upon it only as a system of notions, and a guide to speculation: No, it is a practical religion, that tends to the right ordering of the conversation. It is designed, not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives. From the method of the apostle's writing in this, as in some other of the epistles, (as from the managery of the principal ministers of state in Christ's kingdom) the stewards of the mysteries of God may take direction how to divide the word of truth: Not to press duty abstract from privilege, nor privileges abstract from duty; but let both go together, with a complicated design, they will greatly promote and befriend each other. The duties are drawn from the privileges by way of inference. The foundation of Christian practice must be laid in Christian knowledge and faith. We must first understand how we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and then we shall know the better how to walk in him.

There is a great deal of duty prescribed in this chapter; the exhortations are short and pithy, briefly summing up what is good, and what the Lord our God in Christ requires of us. It is an abridgment of the Christian directory, an excellent heap of rules for the right ordering of the conversation, as becomes the gospel.

No, cvi.

It is joined to the foregoing discourse by the word, therefore. It is the practical application of doctrinal truths, that is the life of preaching. He had been discoursing at large of justification by faith, and of the riches of free grace, and the pledges and assurances we have of the glory that is to be revealed: From hence carnal libertines would be apt to infer, therefore we may live as we list, and walk in the way of our hearts, and the sight of our eyes: No, that doth not follow; the faith that justifies, is a faith that works by love. And there is no other way to heaven, but the way of holiness and obedience. Therefore, what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

The particular exhortations of this chapter are reducible to the three principal heads of Christian duty; our duty to God, to ourselves, and to our brother. The grace of God teacheth us, in general, to live godly, soberly, and righteously, and to deny all that which is contrary hereunto: Now this chapter will give us to understand what that godliness, sobriety, and righteousness is, though somewhat intermixed.

1. **I** BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.* 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5. So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith: 7. Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministring*; or he that teacheth, on teachings: 8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it with simplicity*; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9. *Let love be without dissimulation.* Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another; with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another: 11. Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit; serving the Lord: 12. Rejoycing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer: 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15. Rejoyce with them that do rejoyce, and weep with them that weep. 16. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17. Re-compense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

We may observe here, according to the scheme mentioned in the contents, the apostle's exhortations.

1. Concerning our duty to God. We see what is godliness.

(1.) It is to surrender ourselves to God, and so to lay a good foundation. We must first give *our own selves* unto the Lord, *2 Cor. viii. 5.* This is here pressed as the spring of all duty and obedience, *ver. 1, 2.* Man consists of body and soul, *Gen. ii. 7.* *Ecc. xii. 7.*

First, The body must be presented to him, *ver. 1.* *The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body,* *1 Cor. vi. 13, 14.* The exhortation is here introduced very pathetically, *I beseech you, brethren.* Though he was a great apostle, yet he calls the meanest Christians *brethren*: a term of affection and concern. He useth intreaty; that is the gospel way; *as though God did beseech you by us,* *2 Cor. v. 20.* Though he might with authority command, yet for love's sake he rather beseecheth, *Philem. ver. 8.* The poor useth intreaty, *Prov. xviii. 23.* This is to insinuate the exhortation, that it might come with the more pleasing power. Many are soonest wrought upon, if they be spoken fair; are easier led than driven. Now observe,

First, The duty pressed: To present our *bodies a living sacrifice*: alluding to the sacrifices under the law, which were presented or set before God at the altar, ready to be offered to him. *Your bodies*, i. e. your whole selves, so expressed, because under the law the *bodies* of beasts were offered in sacrifice, 1 Cor. vi. 20. Our *bodies and spirits* are designed. The offering was *sacrificed* by the priest; but *presented* by the offerer, who transferred to God all his right, titles, and interest in it, by laying his hand on the head of it. *Sacrifice* is here taken for whatsoever is by God's own appointment dedicated to himself; see 1 Pet. ii. 5. We are both temple, priest, and sacrifice; as Christ was in his peculiar sacrificing. There were sacrifices of atonement, and sacrifices of acknowledgment: Christ is the only sacrifice of atonement, who was once offered to bear the sins of many; but our persons and performances tendered to God through Christ our priest, are as sacrifices of acknowledgment to the honour of God.

Presenting of them notes a voluntary act, done by virtue of that absolute, despotick power, which the *will* hath over the *body*, and all the members of it. It must be a free-will offering. *Your bodies*; not your beasts: Those legal offerings, as they had their power from Christ, so they had their period in Christ.

The presenting of the body to God, implies not only the avoiding of the sins that are committed with or against the body, but the using of the body as a servant of the soul in the service of God. It is to *glorify God with our bodies*, 1 Cor. vi. ult. to engage our bodies in the duties of immediate worship, and in a diligent attendance to our particular callings, and to be willing to suffer for God with our bodies, when we are called to it. It is to yield the members of our bodies, as *instruments of righteousness*, Rom. vi. 13. Though bodily exercise alone profiteth little, yet in its place it is a proof and product of the dedication of our souls to God.

(1.) Present them a *living sacrifice*; not killed, as the sacrifices under the law. A Christian makes his body a sacrifice to God, though he do not give it to be burned. A body sincerely devoted to God is a living sacrifice.

A *living sacrifice*; by way of *allusion*: That which was dead of itself, might not be eaten, much less sacrificed, Deut. xiv. 21. And by way of *opposition*; the sacrifice was to be slain, but you may be sacrifices, and yet live on: an unbloody sacrifice. The barbarous heathen sacrificed their children to their idol gods, not living, but slain sacrifices: but God will have mercy, and not such sacrifice, though life is forfeited to him.

A *living sacrifice*, i. e. inspired with the spiritual life of the soul: It is Christ living in the soul by faith, that makes the body a living sacrifice, Gal. ii. 20. Holy love kindles the sacrifices, puts life into the duties; see Rom. vi. 13. *Alive*, viz. to God, ver. 11.

(2.) They must be *holy*. There is a relative holiness in every sacrifice, as dedicated to God: But besides that, there must be that real holiness, which stands in an entire rectitude of heart and life, by which we are conformed in both to the nature and will of God: even our bodies must not be made the instruments of sin and uncleanness, but set apart for God, and put to holy uses, as the vessels of the tabernacle were holy, being devoted to God's service.

It is the soul that is the proper subject of holiness; but a sanctified soul communicates a holiness to the body it acts and animates. That is holy, which is according to the will of God; when the bodily actions are so, the body is holy. They are the *temples of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. vi. 19. *possess the body in sanctification*, 1 Thess. iv. 4, 5.

Secondly, The arguments to enforce this; which are three.

1. Consider the mercies of God: *I beseech you by the mercies of God*: An affectionate obtestation, and which should melt us into a compliance; *διὰ τῶν ἐλεησέων ἡμεῶν* Ὁ Θεός. This is an argument most sweetly cogent. There is the mercy that is in God, and the mercy that is from God; mercy in the spring, and mercy in the streams: both are included here; but especially gospel-mercies, mentioned, chap. xi. the transferring what the Jews forfeited and lost by their unbelief unto us Gentiles, Eph. iii. 4, 5, 6. the sure mercies of David, Isa. lv. 33. God is a *merciful* God, therefore let us present our bodies to him; he will be sure to use them kindly, and knows how to consider the frames of them; for he is of infinite compassion. We receive from him every day the fruits of his mercy; particularly, mercy to our bodies, he made them, he maintains them, he bought them, he has put a great dignity upon them. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; that our souls are held in life: And the greatest mercy of all is, that Christ hath made not his body only, but his soul an offering for sin; gave himself for us, gives himself to us. Now, sure we cannot but be studying what we shall render to the Lord for all this. And what shall we render? Let us render ourselves, as an acknowledgment of all these favours; all we are, all we have, all we can do; and, after all, it is but very poor returns for very rich receivings: and yet, because it is what we have,

2. It is *acceptable to God*. The great end we should all labour after, is to be *accepted of the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 9. to have him well-pleased with our persons and performances. Now these living sacrifices are *acceptable to God*; while the sacrifices of the wicked, though fat and costly, are an abomination to the Lord. It is God's great condescension, that he will vouchsafe to accept of any thing in us; and we can desire no more to make us happy: and if the

presenting of ourselves will but please him, we may easily conclude that we cannot bestow ourselves better.

3. It is our *reasonable service*. There is an act of reason in it; for it is the soul that doth present the body. Blind devotion, that has ignorance for the mother and nurse of it, is fit to be paid only to those dunghill gods, that have eyes and see not. Our God must be served in the spirit, and with the understanding. There is all the reason in the world for it, and no good reason can possibly be produced against it. Come now, and *let us reason together*, Isa. i. 18. God doth not impose upon us any thing hard or unreasonable, but that which is altogether agreeable to the principles of right reason.

Τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν, *your service according to the word*; so it may be read. The word of God doth not leave out the body in holy worship. That service only is acceptable to God, which is according to the written word. It must be gospel worship, spiritual worship.

That is a *reasonable service*, which we are able and ready to give a reason for; in which we understand ourselves. God deals with us as with rational creatures, and will have us so to deal with him. Thus must the body be presented to God.

Secondly, The mind must be renewed for him. This is pressed, ver. 2. *Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*; i. e. see to it that there be a saving change wrought in you, and that it be carried on. Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind; a change not of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. It is the same with making a *new heart*, and a *new spirit*; new dispositions and inclinations; new sympathies and antipathies; the understanding enlightened, the conscience softened, the thoughts rectified, the will bowed to the will of God, and the affections made spiritual and heavenly: so that the man is not what he was; old things are passed away, all things become new; he acts from new principles, by new rules, with new designs. The mind is the acting, ruling part of us; so that the renewing of that is the renewing of the whole man; for out of it are the *issues of life*, Prov. iv. 23. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more, and living to righteousness more and more, is the carrying on of this renewing work, till it be perfected in glory.

This is called the *transforming* of us; it is like putting on a new shape and figure: μεταμορφῶν; *be ye metamorphosed*. The transformation of Christ is expressed by this word, Matth. xvii. 2. when he put on a heavenly glory, which made his face to shine like the sun; and the same word is used, 2 Cor. iii. ult. where we are said to be changed into the same image from glory to glory.

This transformation is here pressed as a duty; not that we can work such a change ourselves, we could as soon make a new world as make a new heart by any power of our own; it is God's work, Ezek. xi. 19.—xxxvi. 26, 27. But *be ye transformed*, i. e. use the means which God hath appointed and ordained for it. It is God that turns us, and then we are turned; but we must *frame our doings to turn*, Hos. v. 4. Lay your souls under the changing transforming influences of the blessed Spirit; seek unto God for grace in the use of all the means of grace. Though the new man be *created of God*, yet we must *put it on*, Eph. iv. 24. and be pressing forward towards perfection.

Now in this verse we may further observe,

1. What is the great enemy to this renewing, which we must avoid; and that is conformity to this world. *Be not conformed to this world*. All the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus must be nonconformists to this world. Μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε, do not fashion yourselves according to the world. We must not conform to the things of the world; they are mutable, and the fashion of them is passing away; do not conform either to the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the eye. We must not conform to men of the world, of that world which lies in wickedness; not walk according to the *course of this world*, Ephes. ii. 2. that is, we must not follow a multitude to do evil, Exod. xxiii. 2. If sinners entice us, we must not consent to them; but in our places witness against them. Nay, even in things indifferent, and which are not in themselves sinful, we must so far not conform to the custom and way of the world, as not to act by the world's dictates as our chiefest rule, nor to aim at the world's favours as our highest end. True Christianity consists much in a sober singularity. Yet we must take heed of the extreme of affected rudeness and moroseness, which some run into. In civil things, the light of nature, and the custom of nations take place for our conduct; and the rule of the gospel in those cases is a rule of direction, not a rule of contraries.

2. What is the great effect of this renewing, which we must labour after; *That ye may prove, what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*. By the will of God here we are to understand his revealed will concerning our duty, what the Lord our God requires of us. This is the will of God in general, even our sanctification: That will, which we pray may be done by us as it is done by the angels; especially his will, as it is revealed in the New Testament, where he hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.

First, The will of God is *good, and acceptable, and perfect*; three excellent properties of a law. It is *good*, Mic. vi. 8. it is exactly